

YOU AND YOURS

PRACTICAL TALKS ON HOME LIFE

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PREFACE

A nation will be very much what its homes are. Home life makes national life. Patriotism must begin at the fireside. Where the home is in honour, you will find a vigorous and patriotic people. It is the same also with religion. The Church is nowhere more flourishing than where the home is respected. For welfare both here and hereafter, much depends on the home. Modern life is making dreadful breaches in it. Church and state are threatened by this assault, for the home is the very heart of both.

You are interested in your home. You are interested in your country. You are interested in your Church. You will be interested in these talks, and what is more, you will, I trust, be benefited by them, for their purpose is to help Church and country and you by making your home the dearest place on earth.

I. THE HOME

It is a very general remark that home is not now what it used to be. In country places and small towns, the home may retain some, if not all, of its former charms, but in the big cities it has lost much that made it "Home, Sweet Home." Of course the home is what the members of the family make it. But the members of the family are frequently what circumstances make them.

In these days of movies, automobiles, trolleys, golf, sensational magazines, woman suffrage, and women in business, sport, etc., the members of a family are frequently not as closely nor as beneficially associated as formerly. Add to these disrupting influences the spirit of independence and license which the present age fosters, and you will not be astonished that the old-fashioned home is going, or gone.

This is not to say that all these new things are regrettable. Not at all. They are part of the onward movement of the human race. But in the transition stage, it is regrettable that the home is paying such a high price for progress.

For today the world has lost its head with its new achievements. Distraction is mistaken for pleasure, license passes for independence, boldness parades as confidence, recreation degenerates into dissipation. Moreover, in big cities, overcrowding destroys privacy. Modesty, the guardian of virtue, loses its lustre and often departs altogether.

Night workers, Sunday workers and shift workers make a continuous going-and-coming performance in many homes, thus depriving them of the possibility of family assemblage, one of the chief charms of home life, as well as one of the best bonds of family affection.

There is no use assailing these foes of family life. They have come to stay. Our business is to see what we can do under the circumstances to convert them into friends. For it can be done.

It is necessary, first of all, to recognize the altered situation in home life, brought about by modern conditions. The first step in the cure of a patient is that he recognizes the need of a cure. If a man refuses to admit that he is ill, his ailment may get a death-grip on him, and then it is too late for remedies. We need to realize now that the home is confronted by conditions which are fast breaking it up. What are we to do?

When an army is confronted by threatening numbers, it draws closer together. Every unit feels the need of cooperation. Petty differences disappear. The authority of officers is unquestioned. Effort is unified. The result is that frequently the very danger of destruction is made the occasion of efficiency and victory.

And so with the home. Many things in modern life tend to disrupt it. Family ties are becoming weaker and weaker under the assaults of amusement, travel, bad books, business, sport, overcrowding, and the broad spread opportunity and inducement for dissipation. Against these foes of the home, the father and mother, as wise generals, must provide

a defence. And let me say that the preservation of the home spirit will depend almost entirely on the heads of the family.

If a family is already grown up, and the home circle is not what it should be, I am afraid that little can be done. The battle is more or less over, and the army is dragging out a weary retreat. All that may be hoped for in such a home, short of a supernatural victory, is to save the remnants.

The time to safeguard the home begins on the very day of the marriage. Even before God blesses the union with a child, the home has been formed, and if its first development is not right, it cannot, as it enlarges, grow into the right kind of home.

How is the right start to be made? By living as God directs. Man and wife may soon be father and mother. Let them begin to lay the foundation for the family which God may enable them to rear.

The first requisite is that man and wife realize that they are subjects of Almighty God. They are not their own masters even in their own home. The Head Master of every home should be God. The home wherein God is supreme will be the right kind of home no matter what the environment or circumstances may be.

We must realize that we are made to live in this world but not for this world. Our life is a stewardship for ourselves, and also for those whom God entrusts to us. If we lose sight of this accountability and live merely for this life and to suit ourselves, our families will do the same. And in these days of home decay, no family can hold out against worldly assaults unless God be its defender and ruler.

Such is the basis of happy home life. To realize that we are placed on this earth to live for a certain time as God directs, and not as we please, is to solve the riddle of life, and to find the key to home welfare.

For God places us here for a few years to test us, to find out if we are worthy of sharing His divinity forever in heaven. He permits the ups and downs of life that we may show ourselves true to Him. If we prove faithful, we shall become, in the end, children of God. Knowing this, we can bear our hardships patiently, and enjoy our good fortune with measure and gratitude. In all things we can observe moderation. We will respect God and reverence His holy law.

Show me the man and wife who truly reverence God, and I shall show you the nucleus of a happy home. They may not be rich; God may not want them to be. They may not have high social position; God may be pleased to keep them lowly. But they will have the substantial peace which comes from knowing that they are friends of God, and that whenever He calls them, they are ready to meet Him as friends dear to Him. The man and wife living thus are safe and secure amid all the dangers of modern life. If their children are brought up with the same respect for God, they will be good sons and daughters, no matter what their environment.

The trouble with some families is that the parents do not respect God or each other, and in consequence the children do not respect their parents. If little ones are brought up from the very beginning to love God and obey Him, they will also love and obey their parents.

Nowadays, when, on account of business and the customs of society, children are left so much to themselves, it is very essential that they have within themselves a safeguard for virtue and a motive for devotion to the family. It is simply impossible, except in isolated cases, to make people virtuous or devoted by worldly means. The world is essentially selfish, and worldly motives will make people virtuous and devoted only so long and in so much as it profits them to be so. Virtue and family welfare demand sacrifice. The greatest incentive to sacrifice in the whole world is love of God.

One reason, the main reason, why the family in many cases is faring so badly at present, is that religion, outside our holy Faith, has lost its meaning and its hold on people. It is not the various new distractions and perils of society which bring ruin, but that these perils must be faced without the safeguards of religion.

Although the main purpose of religion is to bring us securely to our eternal inheritance, it has also this special feature, that it makes our journey to eternity a truly peaceful pilgrimage, and saves us from numerous disasters on the way. No wayfarer of life meets with so many hardships as he who leaves God out of the reckoning.

The religious man may and will have his afflictions, but he realizes that they are carrying him heavenward if he bears them in the spirit of religion. The man of practical faith knows that the cross here means the crown hereafter.

Consequently his hardships have a purpose and a value, and this conviction enables him to go through life and meet its unescapable ordeals not only patiently but even cheerfully.

The spirit of faith will do more to restore the home to its proper place than all the countless means and contrivances which modern worldly-wise people can devise. Presently I shall touch on some very practical matters. Now I wish to say a word on basic principles. We must not expect the spirit of faith to animate the family unless it also dominates the parents. The realization that God is ever present, and that we may at any moment be called by Him to give an account of our stewardship, will make parents solicitous and children dutiful.

When parents have a right sense of their responsibility they will ordinarily have devoted children, and where children are devoted to parents, we have the ideal home. Bad environment and perilous conditions may put hindrances in the way of the home, but they can never disrupt it if true faith abides in its members.

What then will restore the family to its rightful place and condition? Principally the practice of religion. Not nominal religion. That often does more harm than good. Blank cartridges are of no use before an armed burglar. Nominal religion is nothing but a blank cartridge. Sometimes people who have a reputation for piety discredit religion by their conduct in the home. In most cases of the kind you will find that their religion is only nominal.

In the home where God is rightly honoured, it is realized that children cannot honour God without honouring their parents, and parents will understand that they cannot honour God without respecting each other and living mainly for the children. It is easy to see that with such a spirit animating children and parents, the family circle will be truly "Home, Sweet Home."

Of course every family will have its misunderstandings and annoyances. That is life. There is no escape from it. But the home wherein God is supreme will be able to meet these vicissitudes in a way that will make them a blessing. Some of the happiest homes that I have known were those where affliction had abounded; for the peace and comfort which God knows how to bestow on His own, also abounded there. If you would save the home, therefore, and have it the dearest place on earth, begin by putting it on the foundation of Faith. If after you have done this, the home is not what it should be, it will be exceptional.

We must not forget that we have not here a lasting city, but that we seek one which is to come. A certain worldly man has said that our home is our heaven. Our home may be very dear to us, but the best home will have many annoyances and afflictions to remind us that our true home is not here, but hereafter.

Sometimes it happens that there is serious trouble in a home where every member of the family is truly religious. God at times permits even the just to suffer in order to perfect them. Saints have had serious misunderstandings in the Church of God. We must not forget that a difference in point of view will align the best of people in opposite camps. This shows us that life is a warfare.

But it also shows us that we should be armed, for the strife. If our Faith, with its aid and protection, does not eliminate all misunderstandings and other evils, how much would they be multiplied without this wonderful gift of God? The home, even with all helps which religion affords, will have its afflictions. But without religion, especially in these days, it is in imminent danger of disruption.

Alas, we see confirmation of this on all sides. Home for many people is now but a wayside inn. Seeking distraction constantly, without ever satisfying the quest, many of our young people today wear themselves out before their time. They leave the fountain of clear water for the polluted stream. Home, which for them should be the most attractive spot on earth, becomes merely a stopping place at which to put up until they can start off again to weary themselves in the way that gives no refreshment or peace.

I know that it will be too late for those who are well on in life to profit by what I am advising. The home, to be a true home, must be carefully built from the foundation up. We cannot be indifferent for years, and then, when we find we have no home, expect to make one. It is then too late. We may repair some of the breaches, but we shall rarely have a home that deserves the name unless we have started it right.

But to those who are beginning the formation of a home, to young husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, I say that the home is going to be what they make it. A home does not happen. Nothing in this world requires more careful

construction. On a bad foundation it is impossible to erect a good structure. Begin from the very beginning. Make it a home from the start.

Religion does not exclude, rather it presupposes human cooperation. I shall therefore endeavour to help by setting forth some practical matters which have a very direct bearing on the home. I repeat, the home will be what we make it. Like a business, it may be neglected and ruined. Nothing takes care of itself.

The following chapters will take up in detail the factors which make for a good home. As the reader will perceive, the subjects are treated in a very practical way. Throughout there is not a suggestion that is not founded on experience. I feel certain that those who take these recommendations to heart and endeavour to carry them out practically, will find as the years go on, and they more and more feel the need of a home, that theirs will truly be "Home, Sweet Home."

II. FATHER

An army is for the most part what its general is. Troops are very much the same everywhere. It is the general that makes the difference. The same troops under different generals will be victors or vanquished. It is so in business. How often do we see a losing concern put on its feet by a new head! The father is the head of the family. On him depends in great measure the happiness of the home. He is the general of the little fireside army, and on his policy will depend the success or failure of those committed to his charge.

We know how careful railroads are to have good engineers. If the engineer is not dependable, the good road-bed and costly cars matter little. A careless engineer can wreck the best train on the best road. A good engineer can guide his train safely over the most dangerous route. What the engineer is to the train, the father is to the family. Of course a train needs a good deal more than an engineer, but the engineer is the guiding hand; the safety and welfare of the passengers depend upon him.

It is the joint influence of a good father and mother that makes the ideal Christian family. The influence of a mother is gradual and gentle. Her sweetness and tenderness soften the most hardened dispositions. Her sacrifices inspire love and loyalty. But something more than this is required in the rearing of a family.

Children up to a certain age take the love and sacrifice of parents for granted. They are so accustomed to the affectionate care of father and mother that it is only later in life that they realize how much they owe them. Up to a certain period, children are little animals. They need a firm hand. That is where the father is necessary.

I say a firm hand. I do not mean a hard hand. Firmness is consistent with the greatest kindness and consideration. Indeed, it is only kindness and consideration that can make a man truly firm. Firmness without kindness is cruelty or stubbornness. Firmness presupposes a considerate view of a situation, and the determination to act for the true welfare of those concerned. It does not degenerate into weakness or stubbornness. It knows how to insist, and how to relax, when it is advisable.

In order to be practical, I shall point out just what I mean by this kind firmness, which is a most essential quality in the right type of father.

First of all, children must know that if father says a thing, he means it. Children are very observant. They soon decide whether or not they may take liberties with father. I have seen a big, powerful man lay down the law to his child, who would listen and then act regardless of what was said. Why? The child knew from experience that it could do so.

Another father will talk to his child in a quiet way, and the child will no more think of going against orders than of putting its hand in the fire. He knows from experience that the father means what he says.

A threat may serve the purpose once, but if it is not carried out it will have no meaning the second and subsequent times. The threatening or loud attitude means nothing to a child. What counts is authority. If the father tells his child to do something, he must see that it is done. Once children see that an order is meant, they will respect it. But if a command turns out to be a suggestion or an appeal or an expectation, it should occasion no surprise if the child acts accordingly. An order is an order. Either the parent has something worthwhile to say to his child when he gives

instructions, or he has not. If not, he had better remain silent. But if a command is given, let it be a command, and respected as such.

Of course some fathers are incapable of making themselves and their wishes respected. The more is the pity. But if you analyse the success or failure of a father's authority, you will find that it depends upon his possession of firmness joined with kindness. Firmness may be cultivated as well as any other quality.

I beg of fathers of families to be firm concerning a command, once it is given. But before telling the child that he must do this or refrain from doing that, the father is bound to consider whether such orders are just and expedient. He must make sure that his orders are practicable and beneficial and then see to it that they are carried out.

Many fathers give orders first, and think of their advisability afterwards. Of course, one who does that cannot be firm, and his authority goes. A father should never give an order the fulfilment of which he does not think it worthwhile to insist on. If the child's training begins in the right way, he will never think of disobeying.

In minor matters, a child may be thoughtless, or so interested in something or other, that he may forget or disobey instructions. A wise father will know how to make allowances. Firmness must be considerate. But once a line is drawn in a matter of importance he should never let it be crossed without the child's regretting it.

In that way, as the child grows up, it will form habits of docility, and later on its parents will not have to complain, as so many do, that they cannot control their children. In nine cases out of ten, when children are blamed for unruliness, it is the parents' fault. The duty of the father is to see that from its earliest years the child obeys its parents or learns by experience that it is to its disadvantage to disobey.

In dealing with children, it is hard or impossible to give any rule which applies generally. A parent must study his children, for in one family it may be that no two will respond to the same discipline. Children are as different in character as they are in appearance.

Some children respond to kindness only. Such should never be harshly dealt with. It tends to make them stubborn. They will do anything for love, but little or nothing for fear. Such children are a blessing, but the parents must cultivate this fine quality in them. The less a child has of it, the more the father should endeavour to develop it in him.

Other children respond best to what I may call expediency. They are clever and calculating, and if they find it does not pay to disobey, they will not do it. Such children are best managed by words of encouragement and little kindnesses, and even, at times, rewards for well doing. But they should never be led to believe that they are to be good only for a consideration.

There is a third class which, from an excess of animal spirits, seems to mind neither kindness nor advantage, and respects no law or order except it be enforced by a strong hand. These children are ordinarily very good at heart, but in their superabundance of vitality they tend to be a law to themselves. Here is where the father's authority is necessary. His word must be law. And a peculiar thing about children of this kind is that under firmness they are happier as well as better.

Moreover they respect and love those who can master them. Children are like men — they hate to submit to others, but when they find someone who is really their master, they admire him. The very happiest children I have ever known are in families where the father is master and head, not 'only in name but also in reality. A father who gives way to his children loses their respect and frequently their affection. The best loved fathers are those who have shown character in dealing with their children.

By character I do not mean severity. A firm man is rarely severe, but he is as steady as a rock when he once takes a stand. Severity is a mask "which a man of true character, or strength, does not have to use. A severe father will often defeat his own purpose.

A firm father will always be moderate and calm, qualities which win admiration and increase love. It is better not to correct or chastise when one is not calm, for correction given in anger ordinarily does more harm than good. Power, character, and firmness are shown by control. Reserve force has a wonderful effect on children as on men. A dignified reserve will do more in dealing with children than the greatest show of anger and passion. If a father means what he says, and carries out what he says, he will seldom have to resort to stern measures.

Of course things are different for the father who has already forfeited the respect and obedience of his children by his intemperate dealings with them, but you fathers whose children are young, start, I beg of you, from the beginning, and bring your little ones up to respect your authority. Then, when they arrive at the estate of youth, you will not have to complain that they are unmanageable and disrespectful.

The very best way, however, for a father to win the respect and obedience of his children is by his own example. There are two virtues which will make a father an inspiration and an ideal to his children — regard for his religion, and respect for the mother of his children. If a man does not obey his Church, which commands him to go to Mass on Sundays and to receive the Sacraments duly, he should not be surprised if his children fail to respect and obey him. Moreover, if his children see that he neglects his Church, they will soon follow his example. That means that the best influence of life is taken from them. Even with the aids of religion, the path of youth is full of dangers. Without religion, it is one continuous pitfall. Every father knows that. The religious young man and woman have a protection and assistance in the journey of life which those without religion can never have. By fidelity to his religion the father will equip his dear ones with the God-given armour which it affords. I need not remind the father that he will have to render to God an account of the example he has been to his children in regard to religious observance. Next to religion, the best way to inspire love and obedience in children is by the father's regard for their mother. Mark it well, a father will never receive any more respect from his children than he pays to their mother. Even if she has shortcomings, it is his duty to shield her. In that way, whatever her defects, they will become less. If instead of being kind and considerate to her, of shielding and helping her, the father breaks out in abuse, she will become worse, and the children will lose respect for both father and mother.

His religion and the mother of his children are paramount in a man's life. Fidelity to them will do more for the welfare of the children than all else besides. The dignity of a father of a family is great; so also is his responsibility. Fidelity to his religion will enable him to discharge that responsibility properly, and consideration for the mother of his children will teach them consideration for their father as well as for her.

Many a home, instead of being a paradise is a hell — usually because the father makes it so by his inconsiderate ways towards the mother. If the children see constant bickering and abuse, they fall into the same way; but where they observe a kindly and considerate manner in their parents, they quickly adopt kindness and consideration toward mother and father and among themselves. As for the value of this advice, remember, it is never too late to mend.

A good father may have his difficulties in bringing up a family, but he will also have his substantial joys. What is comparable to the good father who has the love and respect of his children? What a pleasure it is to toil and plan for those little ones of his own flesh and blood whom God has given him to rear, not only for this life, but for the everlasting kingdom. In their tender years he is their guide and support; in his old age, they will be his comfort. The day will come, if he lives long enough, when he will depend upon their tender care and affection. What better way to deserve their love in his fading years than to win it as a good father while they are growing up.

It is not the indulgent father that is loved most. The greatest affection of sons and daughters goes out to the father who was a man in very deed, a man who worked for their welfare regardless of their whims and caprices. Weakling fathers who prefer passing peace to the lasting good of their children gain neither their love nor their respect.

God's way is the best way. And God made the father to be the head of the family. The head is not directed by the members, but guides and directs them. What the head is to the body, God intends the father to be to the family. The mother is the heart of the family. Head and heart in mutual accord constitute the well-being of the home.

Fathers of families, if you would have obedient and loving children, love and obey your Father in heaven and reverence the mother of your children! Even the father who does his full duty to God and towards the mother of his children will find many difficulties, embarrassments and disappointments in the rearing of his family. But he will have the assurance that these untoward happenings have not occurred because he failed to do his duty.

If a man does his best, he can bear with calm mind the vicissitudes of family life, but if he feels in his heart that he has neglected his duty, the mishaps will become almost unbearable. He will realize that the wayward son or daughter was made so by his unfatherly conduct. It is bad enough to have a bad son or daughter, but much worse to have been a bad father.

On the other hand, what a constant comfort to the father to reflect that the little ones whom God has given him were started right in life, by his example and direction. It is worth all the toil and worry that a good father experiences, to realize that his life has had a noble purpose, and has put those dear to him in the right way to achieve in their turn a noble purpose in life.

Nor is this all. A good father will stand with his hands full before the judgment seat of God. He will hear from the Father of us all words which will repay him for the efforts and sacrifices he has made, and he will rejoice forever that he manfully did his duty. If you would be a happy father in eternity, be a good father now.

III. MOTHER

If the father is the head of the family, the mother is its heart. I do not know of a better way of showing the true worth and position of the mother of a family than by likening her to its heart.

Strength must be tempered with gentleness, or there is danger of rule by force. The strength of man is required for the protection and upbuilding of the family. The gentleness of woman is just as necessary to restrain that strength and sustain it. For strength needs maintenance as well as restraint. The mother's sacrifices and devotion reanimate the father when his strength wanes from exhaustion, and restrain him when it would lead him to excessive measures. Children who are blessed with a firm father and a gentle mother have something for which to thank God all the days of their lives.

In considering the father, it seems that he means more to the family than does the mother. But in considering the mother, it seems that she is the more essential. The truth is, both have their necessary place and dignity, and in general it cannot be said which makes more for the well-being of the children. Where father and mother are what they ought to be, their mutual influence on the children is ideal, and though different in kind, about equal in degree.

A good father means everything to a family if the mother is not the right kind. And a good mother has often made the children forget that they have a bad father. It almost seems that whenever the father is delinquent, the mother rises to noble heights of devotion and service, and if the mother fails, the father assumes added duties nobly.

Neither father nor mother, however, can fall short of his or her duty without a decided detriment to the children in one way or another. Children without a good father lose something which no mother can make up for. And children without a good mother will go through life deprived of something which the best of fathers cannot supply. Neither father nor mother, therefore, can afford to leave to the other the part which God has intended specifically for him or her.

I do not need to say anything about the worth and dignity of a mother. The man or child who needs to be told that nothing on earth approaches so near to the divine as does a mother's love, knows not what a mother is, and cannot be made to know. The man or child who does not know the sublime influence of a mother's love has not felt the most inspiring sentiment that one human being can arouse in another.

Instead of glorifying the mother, I wish to say a few words to her which may help her to become what every mother desires to be — the best human influence in the lives and hearts of the children whom God has given her. It is hard for me to restrain myself from eulogizing instead of advising the mother.

Taking for granted, therefore, that mothers are the loftiest expression of the goodness of God in this world of ours, let me say that they should do nothing to lessen the wonderful influence for good which they can exert. A mother should remember her function in the family — she is its heart.

What a world of meaning that one word suggest! It is the heart that suffers and sometimes breaks. It is the heart that rejoices and overflows with joy. Suffering and sympathy make the mother so cherished, so inspiring, so loved. Suffering and sympathy also bring to the mother her greatest joy. For her heart is so good that she delights to suffer for the well-being of others. Her kind, gentle nature it is that cheers the children and their father, and helps them over the rough places on the journey of life.

But if the mother has her cares and sufferings, she also has her joys. Indeed, it may be said that no human joy is comparable to that experienced by a good mother. Every joy of the children and their father is hers twofold. If her

mother's love causes her to suffer with her family, it also enables her to rejoice with them, and no human joy is so free from alloy as a mother's.

Besides she realizes that in proportion as she lives for her family, they live for her. The good mother is the queen of the household. She reigns supreme over the hearts of her subjects. More than that, she is the inspiration of the father of the family. Under the gentle Influence of a good mother, the father of a family finds it easy to toll and to face the trials of life. Oh, that every mother might realize her dignity and power, for she holds the key to the souls of her children and It Is she who opens their little hearts and places in them the seeds of future character.

Motherhood exercises the most intimate and powerful influence known among men. Some of the greatest Saints were the children of saintly mothers. St. Augustine was the fruit of St. Monica's example and prayers and tears. St. Louis of France found in his mother Blanche a holy model. Her words, spoken to him in his youth, "I had rather see you dead at my feet than guilty of mortal sin," were engraved on his heart and influenced him throughout his entire life. The great St. Bernard was the child of a mother so holy that virtue, inculcated by her example, became almost second nature. Bad mothers have also left their impress on their children. The mother of Nero was a murderess. What he was the whole world knows to its disgrace. The mother of Voltaire was notably immoral. The son surpassed the mother in vice. Rightly, then, may we say, "The mother in her office holds the key of the soul, and stamps the coin of character on her child." What a wonderful responsibility that puts upon the mother! As the potter fashions the clay, so does the mother mould the child by her precepts, but still more by her example. Her responsibility gives to the mother her lofty place in life and justifies the poet when he exclaims, "Then crown her queen of the world."

The first school a child attends is the one presided over by its mother. On those early lessons begun in the cradle and continued in the home, the career of after life mainly depends. Youth is like wax for receiving impressions and like steel for retaining them. If in the tender years of childhood the mother has placed the proper impress on her children, they will be the better for it all their lives. But if, as sometimes happens, a bad impression has been made in the classroom of childhood, the misfortune of it for mother and for child will indeed become evident as time goes on.

As the children grow up the solicitous care of the good mother follows them in the home and outside. You may fancy that all this is a burden on the mother. As well say that a miner who safeguards the gold he has dug from the earth is burdened by its care. As the miner looks ahead and sees in vision the comfort and luxury which his wealth will procure, and in that prospect finds peace and joy in spite of his labour, so does the good mother rejoice in the care of her children, forseeing that her affectionate care will make both them and herself happier and better in the years to come.

The good mother is like a gardener who cultivates delicate plants. The gardener must prepare the soil and keep it moist and remove every harmful growth. But the joy he experiences as the plants rise from the ground and develop into beautiful flowers, more than repays him for his labour. The pleasure of beholding the result of his painstaking care is so great that frequently he cultivates a garden not for what it produces but for the pleasure of producing. When the plants are human souls, when the tender growth is one's own child, what must be the joy of the gardener! And as the devoted mother watches her flowers unfold, beholds their love responding to her own, what joy on earth compares with her! "Then crown her queen of the world," for queen she is. The world is what mothers make it.

Napoleon, on being asked what France needed most, as it lay prostrate after prolonged war, replied, "Mother!" Mothers of the right sort, he wanted, mothers who would rear children to promote the glory of France. Napoleon knew of what he spoke. He had seen men under all conditions, and with his genius for realizing situations he perceived that the greatest need of his fallen country was not wealth, but mothers.

The mother it is who by her gentle care transforms the "young animal," the being with its possibilities of selfishness and cruelty, into a Christian man. She thus cooperates with God not only in the creation of her child but also in the formation of a cultured man and child of God. Rightly conceived, what a dignity is motherhood! Nowadays, alas, some mothers fail to appreciate their lofty station. Instead of living for the substantial joys of motherhood they spend their energies on trifles. Like children, they desire nothing but sweets, failing to realize that nature calls for substantial diet and not merely attractive desserts. Desserts are very good in their place, but they must not take precedence of substantial food.

Some mothers neglect the home for outside. Relaxation and amusement are necessary for mothers, but not at the expense of their motherly duties. Nature has so ordered that a good mother finds her greatest relaxation and entertainment in the home. No amount of outside distraction will compensate for what she loses by spending herself on external amusements and persons. I do not mean at all to belittle social duties and proper amusements. These, are not only desirable but necessary. But they are not paramount. Some mothers seem to make visiting and theatre-going and display their main purpose of living. And all the while they are losing the God-given joys of the home and, moreover, their children are growing up without due supervision and the father of the family is often secondary to outsiders. I know that I may be considered extreme in speaking thus, but if you knew of all the broken homes caused by frivolous mothers you would desire me to be even more vigorous in exposing this malady, which is more pronounced now perhaps than ever before. Because of licentious magazines and indecent theatres and a worldly code of morals a premium is now put upon the very things which formerly were in disrepute. All this has resulted in wrong standards of motherhood among many women.

Some frivolous mothers measure their happiness by the amount of gadding about they can do and by the capacity of the father of the family to furnish them with dress and outside amusement. Such mothers wonder why it is that after a time they are like dried up cisterns. They have sold their inheritance for a mess of pottage. The supreme joys of the home have been bartered for outside distraction, which brings in the end nothing but emptiness. Not that a mother should not have recreation, I repeat, but a good mother usually finds that her chief pleasure is the home.

Please do not understand me to mean that a mother should be tied down to the home. But there are some mothers who are almost strangers to the home. They are uneasy unless they have a date for this and that, and they count that day lost which has not been spent in paying or receiving a visit.

They are surprised at length when they realize that the home has no attraction for them. But it is they who have made it unattractive. If the mother gads abroad, the children will run loose also. The father on returning from a hard day's work will find a cold reception. The mother has spent herself on outsiders, and she has nothing left for the children and their father.

Soon she has nothing left for herself. The affection and esteem of her family have been lost. As the children grow up, they seek their amusement outside, away from the home made unattractive by a selfish mother. Then, too late, she realizes that she has made a mistake. Her home is not a home. Her children find their pleasure anywhere, except at the fireside, their father seeks his pleasure elsewhere, and the home has gone forever.

How very, very many homes have been made desolate by such procedure! The woman is amazed when she hears about the devotion of other families to their mothers. She wonders why her children and their father do not mean for her all that other families mean for other mothers. Oh, if I could only make mothers realize how much their happiness and that of their families depends upon devotion to the home!

Nature has fitted all things for their appointed purposes. And nature has so constituted a mother that her greatest peace and happiness is found in motherly duty. There need be no fear that she will become a piece of furniture in the home. If she does her part, she will find that her children and their father are more solicitous for her welfare and enjoyment than for their own.

In a thousand ways, all that is done for them will come back to the mother. How to make their mother happy will be their first thought. They will find ways and means of giving her more pleasure in the home and outside than she would ever get by being always on the lookout for her own amusement and distraction.

Never in the history of the world has there been such a craze for selfish enjoyment as of late. People seek amusement here and distraction there, thinking only of themselves. With what result? In this era of selfishness there is more dissatisfaction, disappointment, distress and disorder than ever before.

The worst way to satisfy self is to seek self. Selfishness is the worst possible investment a person can make. We are images of God. God's happiness is to make others happy. The closer we approach to His way, the happier we shall be. The very essence of goodness lies in imparting itself to others. The best and happiest people in the world are they who find their pleasure in doing something for others. It is the one pleasure that has no unpleasant reaction.

I remember on one occasion meeting a longshoreman on the docks of Manhattan and saying to him: "My dear man, you have a hard and long day of it."

"Very true, Father," he replied, "but when I think of my children and their mother, and that my wages give them the comforts they need, the day does not seem hard or long."

That was wisdom in a nutshell. That man did not find life a burden. That man was happy in making others happy. God bless him and the many like hi!

After all, what do we get out of life that is worthwhile! Dress, food, travel, society, entertainment? When you sum it all up, what does it give you that really contributes to a contented mind? A good friend is more than all the style and amusement of life. And if a friend is one of the greatest blessings of life, what must children and their father be to a mother!

We like to please our friend. A mother likes to please her children and their father. Who does not know the great joy that comes from giving a friend a substantial and desirable present? A good mother gives to her children and their father the best present of all — herself. And this is a pleasure she enjoys, not only occasionally, but daily. Mrs. Gadabout often wonders how Mrs. So-and-so can stand her quiet and confined life. And all the while Mrs. So-and-so, a good mother, is thanking God for her paradise on earth.

Oh, the joys of a mother who is a good mother! Oh, the happiness of the mother who spends herself on her children and their father! Drudgery, Mrs. Gadabout calls it, but a little bit of heaven the good mother considers it. Is there any joy in the world like working for those you love? And no human love is, or should be, greater than that of a mother towards her children and their father. The mother who does not find her greatest joy in living for her family is hardly a mother at all.

Of course I know as well as you, Mrs. Gadabout, that a woman should not be tied down to the routine of domestic duty. There are social duties as well as domestic. The mother who fails in her social duties is unfair to herself and her family. For certain circles the social duties are imperative. But the good mother will know how to discharge them, not as a detriment to the home, but as a benefit to it.

I have known social butterflies, mothers of families, who did not see their children more than once a wee! Of course that was among people of wealth, where maids and governesses were supposed to look after the children. But maid or governess is not a mother, and it may be too late when the mother realizes it.

In the ordinary walks of life, Mrs. Gadabout has no maids or governesses, but, nevertheless, she sacrifices the home, the children, and their father to her craze for novelty and amusement. Such a mother must pay an awful tax for her pleasure. When she can least afford it that tax will be levied, for the time will come when she no longer cares to gad about. She will wake up to the emptiness of it all and then turn to seek her comfort in her home, only to find that she has none. Meanwhile the children and their father have lost the best human influence in their lives.

But the good mother! As the years steal on, the affection of the children and their father grows stronger and stronger. Their only thought is for her. She who found her joy in sacrificing herself for others now finds that it has all come back to her manyfold. Idolized by her family, she reigns queen of the home. Her heaven, it seems, has begun before she says farewell to earth.

And that is another thing which the good mother has always in view, that this life is not heaven, but only the way to it. She expects a way of the cross, and that very expectancy makes it less hard to walk in the path of affliction when it stretches before her, as sooner or later it does for all.

She teaches her children and their father by her example to live in this world, but not for it. She is careful that family prayers are said, that Mass is duly attended, and the Sacraments frequently received. She inculcates piety by word and deed.

Although solicitous for the worldly success of her children, she gives them to understand that it must never be attained at the cost of virtue. She teaches truthfulness, purity and consideration by her own high ideals. She knows that if she is to have the love and respect of her children she must show love and respect to their father.

While insisting on the necessity of the virtues of religion, she does not overlook the social virtues. She realizes that the religion of her children will lose nothing before God, but will gain before men if it be adorned by the outward graces and refinements which constitute good manners and are held in esteem by good society.

To live for the eye of God, but not to overlook the eye of man, that is her lesson to her little ones. She knows that often a very virtuous person may be put down as vicious because of vulgarity. Vulgarity is not sin. But as people see only the exterior, a virtuous person should avoid vulgarity as a disease. The good mother will inculcate this in the minds of her children.

How often have you traced a non-Catholic's condemnation of our Religion to the fact that a Catholic maid, butler or workman was careless or lacking in the social virtues? A good Catholic would die rather than offend God by sin. Yet often enough people without religion, sinning seriously and continually, appear more virtuous than some Catholics simply on account of the social virtues.

Mothers of families should be the first to see the importance of the niceties and conventionalities of good society. Children brought up in the right Catholic way will have manners superior to all that the rules of society alone can give. Keep God's commandments and do not neglect the polite laws of human intercourse. That should be the aim in every family, and it will be accomplished mainly by the influence of a good mother.

A mother who has good children possesses more than money or anything else can give. You know the story of the Roman matron who, when asked by a frivolous gad-about of that era, to display her jewels, called her two sons, and embracing them, said: "Behold my jewels!"

On a certain occasion a mother was complaining to me of her poverty. I told her I thought she was quite well off. In surprise, she declared that she could not understand my remark. I answered nothing in reply, but changed the topic of conversation. A few minutes later I returned to the matter indirectly.

"I know a gentleman who is very wealthy, and he has taken a decided fancy to your little John. He told me he would like to adopt him and he will give you fifty thousand dollars as a present if you will consent. You have seven children, and you will not miss Johnnie. What do you say?"

Of course I knew what she would say, but I was not prepared for the vigorous denunciation of the gentleman and myself which followed. It concluded by her announcing that not for fifty thousand nor for fifty million would she give up Johnnie.

Smiling, I said: "Did I not tell you that you were rich?"

She, too, smiled and went away happy — and rich.

Every good mother is possessed of more wealth than she realizes. Money does not procure happiness — good motherhood does. Even though a good mother has privations to meet and disappointments and even ingratitude, she nevertheless has a wealth of joy in her solicitude for her loved ones.

Ingratitude is the hardest stroke she may have to bear. God may at times permit a good mother to suffer this extreme pang. But it is because He loves her as she loves her children, and He knows that affliction will make her dearer to Him. Christ and His mother knew the sting of ingratitude. They bore it in order to sanctify its endurance for those who accept it patiently for God's sake.

The good mother will turn even ingratitude into a source of peace and joy, realizing that by it she can draw closer to God, and also obtain His help and grace for her ungrateful ones. For the good mother loves even the ingrates of her household.

How like unto God she thus becomes, for He loves us even when we turn away from Him or positively offend Him. The Good Shepherd sought especially the sheep that strayed, and the good mother somehow seems to love with especial tenderness her strayed sheep. God made her so.

Mothers, you have a wonderful mission in the world. Not until you see God face to face will you realize what it meant to be a good mother.

IV. HUSBAND

The closest association of life is that of husband and wife. The period of courtship is a wise provision which affords time and means for young people to make sure that they are keeping company with the one who will make a suitable companion for life. One reason why there are unhappy marriages is that courtship is looked upon by many as a time of amusement only.

Oftentimes a man marries a girl without knowing her real self at all. Of course I understand that the best and most careful and wisest of men are occasionally mistaken in women. Even with due time and observation, the most prudent man may choose the wrong woman for his wife. But some men rush into matrimony without any regard for its life-long and intimate nature. Then they wonder that marriage is not what they expected it to be.

I am talking now to the husband, the man already married. I can only hope to advise him on a few matters which may enable him to be a happier husband if he is already happy, and a contented husband if he is not so now. The shortest and best advice I can give is that he regard his wife with the very same care and consideration that he has for himself. If he does that, I promise him he will have a happy married life.

The main reason why a marriage turns out badly is that the man proceeds to live for himself, instead of for his wife and himself. The selfishness of the man is the most common cause of marriage blight. Selfishness never pays, least of all in marriage. It is because the Church of God knows human nature so well, its selfishness and fickleness, that it throws around matrimony so many safeguards.

A young man after marriage sees his sweetheart every day. She may not have the same opportunity of adorning herself that she had before. He sees her as she is ordinarily, and she sees him in the same way. It is a maxim that the commonplace does not affect us. Husband and wife tend to become commonplace to each other.

Unless a man has married a girl for herself, "for her character and disposition, as well as for her looks, he will find marriage quite different from what he anticipated. As he gets to know his wife more and more intimately, he may find in her, as she may find in him, not a few undesirable traits. Also, he may find that she has 'many good qualities which he never suspected.

The first year of marriage is therefore the critical period. It is the time of adjustment. If the husband conducts himself wisely and patiently during early married life, he is laying the foundation of years of happiness. Just as a wife must overlook many things in her husband, so must he make allowance for much in her. This mutual consideration is the basis of contentment in married life.

A man cannot utterly change his nature — neither can a woman. Instead of quarrelling over the impossible, they should endeavour to amalgamate. If the husband makes it his main purpose in life to live for his wife and to please her, the chances are that she will make it her sole aim to live for his peace and welfare.

Time and again when I have been asked by newly married people for a word of advice, I have called the man aside and told him to live no longer for himself, but for his wife. And in the same way I have told her to live no longer for herself, but for him. In that way both are really living for themselves.

There is no partnership so important as marriage. How careful business people are to consult the interests of the firm! If one partner finds that something gives him pleasure but hurts the business, he refrains from the pleasure. There is more at stake in the marriage association than in any business partnership. If husband or wife starts out to consider self only, it should occasion no surprise if that marriage turns out a failure.

The husband is no longer a separate unit. Everything he does has an effect on his life's partner. Before doing anything or planning anything of importance he should consider how it is going to affect not merely himself, but his wife also. If in doubt, let him consult her. Even if she always concurs with him it is well to advise with her, as she will appreciate the compliment he is paying her by thus conferring with her.

The early period of marriage is critical for another reason. Until a marriage is blessed with a child, the wife's position is very difficult. The new home is lonely all day. She feels the loss of her old home associations during the long hours when her husband is away. He has his business occupations and cares. She has little as yet in her new home to fill the time she spends waiting for his return.

No matter how tired he may be after his day's work, a wise husband will never be too fatigued to greet his wife warmly on returning home, and to do everything to make the evening a recompense for her long day of waiting. If she wants to go out, he will not offer an excuse for staying in. While courting her he did not put off calling on her for any slight reason. A husband can do at least as much for his wife as he did for the girl he was engaged to.

Some men make the dreadful mistake of thinking that a woman changes her nature when she becomes a wife. She wants attention and love then just as much, and more perhaps, than she did before. Wise is the man who realizes this and acts on it.

The downright neglect which some men show their wives after marriage is appalling. Nothing contributes so much to turning marriage into a mockery. Love, like everything else, needs nourishment. You can starve the strongest love to death by indifference and neglect. A wife's love is the greatest fortune a man can possess. It is worth every effort made for it. What shall we say of the man who risks the loss of that treasure by overlooking any, even the slightest of the things which help to preserve and increase it.

I know only too well that some husbands have a hard time of it. The more they do for their wives the more they want them to do, and in spite of all they are never satisfied. Some wives never seem to appreciate what is done for them, nor what burdens may weigh down a man's soul in his battle with the world of business. To avoid marriage with such a wife the best precaution lies in considering during courtship not merely the girl's looks, but herself. But if a man has made a mistake he must abide by it. Remember the marriage vow: for better or for worse. Even so, the best way for a man to make the worse better is to study his wife and her disposition, and endeavour to do all in his power to be agreeable to her. Sometimes, even then, a man finds it impossible to live congenially with his wife, which goes to show how careful he should be before marriage.

However, a Catholic man always has a remedy where other men have none. His religion comes to his aid. Of course I mean his religion, if it is practical. If it is only nominal, it can serve no purpose. Let the practical Catholic make certain that he is marrying a practical Catholic and religion will furnish a thousand aids altogether unknown to those outside its influence.

Occasionally married couples, both Catholics, have their difficulties and estrangements, but in such cases it is frequently found that one or both are nominal or sentimental Catholics. Practical Catholics know that they must be patient and forgiving and considerate and they try sincerely to be such. When both man and wife are patient and forgiving and considerate there will be no estrangement of consequence. Temperamental differences and difficulties may arise but temperament will bow to religion of the true kind.

The man is the stronger by nature, and must be ready to support the weakness of his wife. Women are by nature more sensitive than men. They are so delicately and exquisitely constituted that the least thing may, at times, upset them beyond all measure. Manly patience is the virtue to be practised on such occasions. A man should try not to lose his temper when his wife becomes excited. If he remains calm, she too will become calm sooner or later; sometimes, alas, later. But the husband's duty is patience. What hers is, I shall say in my talk with her. Just now I am advising the husband, and I say that in proportion as his wife seems unreasonable, he must be calm and tactful. In the end he will be glad. Very often a wife flares up just because she has her husband's welfare so much at heart. She is so concerned for his good that she cannot restrain herself. He should not overlook that.

Again a wife's home cares place her under high tension. Under that strain the least thing may cause her to break out. Her husband must be as oil on the troubled waters. In business a man will put up with a good deal for the sake of patronage. It pays. It more than pays to be very considerate with one's wife. If at any time there is a difference of opinion on any point, such, for example, as the expenditure of money, a quiet talk will disclose the wife's side of the matter and perhaps adjust matters. A husband worthy of the name will not start to condemn and abuse before he has considered the question from all sides. Often a little review of the situation will not only alter his opinion, but have useless and detrimental wrangling.

Wherever possible, dissension should be avoided. Instead of disputing, it is well to confer. Talking a thing over as if seeking information will banish many dissensions. A husband should not expect his wife to make all the concessions. Let him meet her at least half way. Often, when he has given in to her, she will reverse the decision and

yield entirely to him. At all events, dissension should be avoided as a serpent, for like a serpent, it will work its deadly way into marriage and poison family happiness. Dissension costs too much to indulge in it. It produces most frequently the disruption of the bond of affection between man and wife, and when that is broken there is little left of marriage.

Dissension usually has its beginning in some indication of disregard shown by the husband for his wife. It may have been the omission of some little token of love, the forgetting of some sign of affection towards her. A wife is keen to feel any diminution of her husband's love, and even the slightest sign of its lessening will pain and embitter her.

Of course she cannot expect matrimony to be a perpetual honeymoon. She understands that during the honeymoon the ardent passion of love reaches its climax, and that a climax is not perpetual. But the subsiding of love's climax does not mean the passing of love.

Most married people find love growing stronger and stronger with years — not its passion which characterized their first "love making," but a calm, peaceful, satisfying and comforting love which makes their hearts beat in unison and makes each live for the other. This love is far more valuable than the violent emotion, and its possession and maintenance depend in great measure on the husband.

If a man does not cherish his wife, if his first thoughts are not for her welfare, if he does not manifest those little signs of consideration and regard which will show her that his heart is hers, he does not deserve this abiding and consoling love. Love must not only be planted, it must be cultivated. Of all flowers it is the most beautiful and most delicate. It will last forever if it be carefully guarded and nourished. But if a man does not value and cultivate his wife's love, it will gradually change into mere toleration or perhaps into positive dislike.

The husband took a good deal of pains to win his wife's love. Why should he not take as much or more to retain it? Some men think that a wife is like an object which, once obtained, may be used or laid aside as it suits them. Such men come to grief.

Every wife has a natural hunger for the spontaneous affection of her husband and if he fails to give her the love she craves, he is starving not only her but himself as well. It is useless to tell her of his love. He must show it. While courting, he knew the art of love. He cannot say that marriage has made him ignorant of it.

I insist so much on this, my dear men, because I am concerned for your life's happiness. I know of many families wrecked because the husband assumed that, once married, he could let affection take care of itself. A husband should bear in mind that his wife has left father and mother and home associations for him. He is her all.

If a man says that his love has grown cold, and that he cannot show what he does not feel, it is because he mistakes love for passion, or else because he has neglected to foster the love which he once cherished. Love itself does not die easily, and when he married, he felt that his wife was the most lovable girl in the world. Love made him willing to go through fire and water for her. She is the same girl now. She has not changed, and if his love for her is not what it should be, ordinarily it is because he himself has changed. Of course close and continued association has taken the bloom off in some respects, but the love that made him leave all and give himself forever to his betrothed was too deep and strong to pass away, unless little by little he has caused it to depart.

A man may say that his wife is not the woman he took her to be. And I may ask him if he is altogether the man she took him to be? He may say that, while he courted her, she was quite another person. But is not the object of courtship to enable a man to know the girl's real self, her 'disposition and her character?

If a man employed his courtship only to amuse himself, now he must take the consequences. Let him take them like a man, and not complete the ruin of two lives by his selfishness. Even though his wife is not all that he had hoped to find her, let him take her for what she is. He should play the game fair. If he buys a house and it is not everything he expected it to be, he sets to work to make it right. Let him make his marriage right if it is not so. It can be done in most cases, and it will be the best expenditure of effort that any man can make.

Moreover, a Catholic husband must realize that his wife is his wife forever. Religion will enable him to do what he might otherwise find impossible. The Sacrament of Matrimony gives, to the man who lives true to his Faith, the grace

to surmount all the obstacles and trials of married life. If he frequents the Sacraments, I promise him that he will receive the grace to live holily and happily in the marriage bond.

This does not mean that at times he will not have differences and difficulties to meet. In one's own family, where father and mother and brothers and sisters are united in the strongest love and affection, there are occasionally troubles and disagreements. But they pass with the day. It is on these occasions that manhood and religion must guide the husband to do what is proper. An insignificant breach may widen and widen until it is a gulf too wide to bridge over — and all because husband or wife lacks a little consideration for the other.

A husband is a man, and a man can afford to give in to his wife. But if she gets stiff and he gets stout and neither of them will budge, something is bound to happen. If a stone drops from a roof to a stone sidewalk, sparks will fly. But if the stone strikes a grass-plot, it sinks in almost without a sound or sign. A real man can afford to be the grass-plot.

A Catholic husband understands that he can never break the bond of a duly performed marriage. It is to his advantage from the very start so to regulate his attitude towards his wife that, if anything should mar his marriage happiness, it will not be his doing. The home should be his dearest place on earth. His wife's welfare should take precedence of everything.

Neither club nor cafe nor friends should come between a man and his wife. Too often a breach is made because the husband finds his main pleasure away from the home. If a wife sees that her husband prefers outside interests to her, she will suspect his love. No outside issue can compare with home peace and welfare. Too late, often, a husband finds that in overlooking the home and his wife, he has lost life's best treasure.

If God blesses the home with a child, its father should consider it as a gift from heaven, given into his keeping to cement the bond of love between him and his wife. He should regard his child as a jewel which he must polish for God's kingdom.

Parenthood is one of the most sacred of human functions. By it, man and wife cooperate with the Creator for the maintenance of the human race. If they expect God's blessing on their married life, they should never violate the sacred laws of marriage. Any attempt to prevent the natural consequences of marriage relations will bring down God's curse on them.

Some parents seek to regulate the number of their children at will. God often punishes them by depriving them of the children He has given them. Others decide to have no children in their early married life because it would tie them down too much to domestic cares. These are often cursed by God, and later when they would give all they possess for a child, God will not give it to them.

There is no greater sin in married life than that of preventing legitimate life. God punished it terribly in His dealings with the chosen people. He punishes it just as terribly now. If a man does not wish to have a family, he should not enter upon that contract designed by God for the perpetuation of the human family. A man is free to marry or not. But if he marries, he is not free to break the laws of nature and of God. How many homes have been made desolate by man's changing of love into lust!

If God does not see fit to send a child, He blesses a faithful marriage in other ways. But if parents deliberately spurn the child He designs to send them, He exacts an awful penalty. He punishes here and now in ways they little think of, and He will punish them hereafter as He does those who are guilty of taking human life. In God's sight, race suicide is a perversion of one of His most sacred institutions for mankind.

The number of wrecked marriages due directly or indirectly to this sin is appalling. But I need hardly touch on this matter in speaking to Catholics, since it is a sin hardly known among them, thank God!

In conclusion, let me say once more to the husband, that marriage will be in large measure what he makes it. There are exceptional cases, where the man's best efforts are in vain. Such is a sad and hard condition of life, and for that man, his one sure means of making the best of the situation, is his Religion.

Recourse to retaliation or dissipation is useless — that merely puts a man lower down in the pit. Patience is the virtue he must practise. Virtue means strength in doing and bearing. Let him show strength in carrying his burden and he will be amazed to see how light it becomes when It Is carried in the spirit of faith.

Sometimes an unfortunate situation must be met in a strong way. It may be necessary for a husband to put his foot down firmly. His wife may try his very soul. She may cross him at every turn. In such cases, it may be necessary for him to read the "Taming of the Shrew," but he must not forget that he is a Catholic husband, and if he must take strong measures he should do so in a just way.

Unless a marriage has been altogether unfortunate, a man will find that the observance of the many little kindly things which he found so easy to do while courting, will help make his married life a happy one. If he makes his wife his first and chief consideration, he will not have to worry about the rest, ordinarily.

Sometimes for reasons of His own, but always for our eternal welfare, God allows us to be afflicted. With some, the affliction may be poverty or illness or the loss of dear ones. With others, it may be an unsuitable wife. Patience solves many difficulties. And patience is the virtue a husband must practise if, after doing his part fully, his wife fails to correspond.

By patience a husband will not only lessen the evils of an unsatisfactory marriage, but also work out his eternal salvation in a most meritorious way. There is much good deep down in the heart of the most cantankerous woman. By patience, a husband may bring out the good that is in his wife, and thus, even in this life, receive the reward of virtue.

I trust that the husbands whom I am addressing are blessed with good wives and that they value the blessing so highly that they are doing everything in their power to perpetuate it. By frequenting the Sacraments, husband and wife together, they draw God's blessing on them. Fidelity to the Faith, more than anything else, will make man and wife faithful to each other here, and secure for them eternal blessedness hereafter.

V. WIFE

Most plays and stories end with marriage. Some women fancy that when they get married they have achieved their great purpose in life. But marriage is only the beginning of a new and more important chapter in the book of life.

Some women fail to realize that it is easier to win a man's love than to retain it. They believe that love is something which, once possessed, is theirs for good — a great mistake, as they sometimes find out too late. A woman of great worldly experience once told me that she found it much harder to hold her husband's love after marriage than it had been to win it before. And this was a woman of such great charm that her hand had been sought by several desirable men.

Of course true love is never-ending. Where love is based on true mutual affection and regard, it increases with time. But nowadays love is so frequently based on superficial qualities, that we frequently see man and wife after a short time, living as though they barely tolerated each other.

Moreover man's heart is fickle. He may mean every word of love that he vows to his betrothed, at the time. But under constant and close association he loses the idealism of his former devotion, and permits himself to look upon his wife as an ordinary mortal. This is the critical period of marriage.

If the wife at this juncture takes the same pains to please her husband that she did to please her fiancé, his affection for her will mature into a strong and constant love, which will last as long as life. I have seen middle-aged, and old married people every bit as devoted to each other as young lovers. Years of close association, marked by mutual regard and consideration, had augmented their first affection and bound them together with ties of deepest love and sympathy.

I have known other couples who had gone through fire and water in order to marry and who after a few years had nothing in common. Their love was apparently dead. More than once the reason was the selfishness of one or both. It may happen that a young wife thinks only of herself, which invariably leads to marriage failure.

Selfishness in matrimony is fatal. A wife should always remember that her husband's interests are hers and that her greatest interest is her husband.

During, the period of courtship a girl is very careful to appear at her best. Without being finical or negligent of the home, why should she not try to show herself at her best as a wife? I am not thinking of wealthy people whose houses are full of maids to do the work, but of ordinary wives who are their own maids and everything else. Such a wife has

the house to look after, the meals to prepare, the marketing to do. But does that justify her in greeting her husband, on his return from a hard day's work, in soiled clothes and unkempt?

Some wives think that their husbands are indifferent to appearances after marriage. They think that it makes little or no difference whether they look neat or untidy. It makes all the difference in the world. Even a tired woman can afford the small cost in time and effort to appear attractive and bright on her husband's return from work. She has as great a need to be attractive now as when her fiancé was courting her. The attractiveness of the home he comes to, and of his wife, its best ornament, will stimulate his love for home and wife.

Here I may say a word on the importance to a wife of being a good housekeeper. Again, I have in mind, of course, the wife in ordinary circumstances, who does her own work. Even for those wives who are wealthy, a firsthand knowledge of home duties is a great advantage, while for the wife in ordinary circumstances such knowledge is positively necessary. A woman who does not know how to manage the household and prepare a good table should not get married, ordinarily, until she has learned how to do these things. In some countries abroad a marriage license cannot be issued to a woman who does not present her certificate of housekeeping. Many young women rush from the counter or the typewriter to matrimony, knowing little or nothing about keeping house or cooking. The husband may be satisfied for a while with a makeshift dinner, but unless his wife soon learns how to prepare a proper meal, there will be dissatisfaction and eventually quarrels, and a miserable married life.

I want to impress upon wives, the importance of a tidy house and a good table. If a husband returns in the evening to a careless fireside and an untidy wife, why be surprised if gradually he seeks elsewhere the comfort his home fails to provide?

I once asked a greatly beloved wife how she managed to attach her husband so devotedly to his home.

She replied, "It is just a matter of continuing our courtship."

"How is that?" I asked.

"This way," she went on to say. "You see, my husband comes from his office tired and inclined to be on edge. I have the children nicely dressed to give him a welcome; the smaller ones have been put to bed, where they cannot annoy him, and I myself appear at my best. It all takes time and pains, but when I see his smile as he kisses the children, and his love as he embraces me, I feel more than repaid. Then, I do not talk to him too much, for I know he has had that all day. I let him read the paper, and when he has finished and is rested, he begins of his own accord to chat. At that I know he is in the humour for conversation, and we talk on and on."

"My goodness!" I ejaculated, "it is quite an art, isn't it?"

"A very pleasant and profitable art," she replied, as she went on to tell me that she always had her husband's meals ready on time, and to his liking. What was the result? The happiest family gathering I ever knew. That man rarely cared to go anywhere without his wife. He seldom sought his pleasure outside the home. His wife considered his welfare and comfort, made allowances for his condition of mind and body at the end of the day, and he in turn was always on the lookout for her happiness.

But how many young wives there are who spend the day frivolously, and permit their husbands to come home in the evening, to a disordered house, a badly planned and hastily cooked dinner, and an untidy wife! They are surprised that their husbands do not care for home, and that after a while their expressions of love grow less. Such wives have brought on themselves this sad condition of affairs.

A wife can make no better investment than in an inviting home. The inviting home means a house in order, the meals rightly prepared, and a wife attractively, albeit simply, dressed. I have gone into homes which were enough to drive a man to desperation — everything in disorder. Such a home will have little attraction for a husband's leisure hours. I have seen a man sit down, after his long day of toil, to a dinner of a few unsubstantial dishes, chosen because they required little or no preparation.

If a husband toils all day for his wife, shall his wife begrudge a few hours toil for him? For usually it is the woman who has spent the day novel-reading, or at the movies, or gossiping, who is too tired to greet her husband with a smile and invite him to a substantial dinner, and when she finds her marriage a disappointment, she fails to see that she has made it so. She blames marriage and her husband for her empty life, whereas she has only herself to blame. I know of

course that some men are not responsive to the care and attention of their wives. Such men are the exception. I am not dealing with the exceptions, but with normal husbands.

Again, some wives pay no attention at all to their own person. Before marriage they took good care to be very presentable when appearing before their fiancés. As wives, they think that anything is good enough for their husbands. The dresses they have worked in during the day (if they have worked), no matter how soiled, are the ones they keep on for their husbands' homecoming. Some men may be indifferent to disorder in a room, but I have never met or known a man who was indifferent to an untidy woman. If wives could realize how a neat and clean appearance counts, they would not begrudge the time or pains it takes to make themselves attractive for greeting their husbands. There are husbands so much in love with their wives that they can overlook even slovenliness in their appearance, but such husbands are the exception. As a rule, a man is repelled by slovenliness.

I urge wives to be as particular to appear pleasing to their husbands as they were to their betrothed. By that I do not mean that they should spend foolish time in fine dressing, but in their home, even when they are actually engaged in household work, they can be clean and neatly dressed. A wife knows the time of her husband's homecoming, and it does not take long to make herself presentable for his greeting.

I have insisted so much on this point of home attractiveness because I have found that the beginning of many a disruption in marriage originated in the neglect of a wife in regard to the home, the meals and herself.

There is, however, something more than material attractiveness. A wife is man's helpmeet. He looks to her for sympathy and for encouragement. In his battles with the world, he gives and takes like a man. But from his wife, he expects cheerful companionship. A wife has her cares, every wife has, but they are not the heavy material burdens which at times so oppress a man. A good wife remembers her husband's anxieties and tries not to add her own to his. If the details of business cares are his to solve, the petty items of the household should be hers. Some women start complaining as soon as their husbands open the door, and do not let up until they have gone out again, or, rather, until they have driven them out. Men hate a scold.

It is a wise wife who, if she must put her grievances before her husband, does so after the evening is well spent, after she has given him a good welcome, a good meal, and a good rest. Then he will listen to her and help her. If a husband is not in a mood for complaints, it is worse than useless to make them. To urge a matter under that condition is nagging. If there is anything that human nature cannot stand, it is that.

I do not mean that a husband is to be considered a man in a glass case who must never be approached. No, but there is a time and a way. Some women think that the time is always, and that the way is any way.

The wife who has observed the points I have touched on, will not have many grievances. Most husbands are more desirous of pleasing their wives than they are of being pleased. A husband knows that a good wife is the greatest boon a man can be blessed with. He will not allow anything on his part to weaken the bond of love which unites him to his wife. Too often the matters which wives complain of are the result of their own lack of regard for their wifely duties. They kill affection in their husbands, and then berate them for not loving them.

A man wants affection just as much as a woman does. He left father and mother and home for his wife, and now as a husband he desires to love and to be loved. When his betrothed married him, she considered him the most desirable man in the world. She left all for him. Is it not worth her while, therefore, to pay attention to even the little things which will help to keep that mutual love strong?

Some wives hit back. If the husband overlooks something, they construe it into an intentional slight and become resentful. The husband is often preoccupied and unintentionally omits some of the customary tokens of affection. A wife should make allowances. If she feels that her husband has hurt her purposely, she will do more to make him regret it by patiently enduring it than trying to resent it.

Some homes are armed camps. Husband and wife are constantly on the point of hostilities, if not actually engaged in warring on each other. A wife should remember that she can do more with her husband by love than by all the wiles and arts and weapons at her command. Affection is a wife's Big Bertha. No man can resist the true love of his wife. At times he may appear to do so, but it is in appearance only.

To conquer a husband, love him. A wife may say she loves her husband while her deeds disprove her words. He looks for deeds. He wants to see her love shown by consideration for him. If he sometimes seems to be unmindful of her affection, opposition is not the means to win him back. I have known wives to make themselves and their husbands wretched and to wreck their homes, by stubborn and selfish opposition. If they feel that they are not being properly appreciated, they proceed to make matters worse by doing all in their power to make things miserable. After a while, they have not only lost their husband's regard, but have incurred his downright dislike and even hatred.

How many couples have I seen start out as doves, only to become, in a short while, like bears. And why? For one thing — the wife was selfish and stubborn. Such wives are like persons walking in a swamp. The harder they tread, the deeper they sink. And suppose there are children. What a noble example the parents present!

Love cannot be forced. Mark that well. If you cannot win love, you cannot obtain it at all. You cannot drive a man, or a woman, to like you and to yield you the fruits of true love. The harder a wife makes it for her husband, the harder his heart will get toward her.

She may say that, at least she has the satisfaction of paying him back. Not so. She can never exact payment for the loss she inflicts on her womanhood and on her heart by unwifely antagonism. The best way to "pay him back" is to do the full duty of a good wife. That is certain. I am not talking theories.

But I forget that I am talking to Catholic wives. The motives I have set forth so far are those which common sense and experience suggest. The marriage of a Catholic wife is a Sacrament. She took a vow to God to be true to her husband. She took him for better or for worse, as he took her. She is under a sacred obligation to be a help and solace to her husband. She may have her trials and disappointments as a wife. Every career of life has them. Should she shirk her duty, be false to her marriage vow, because things do not suit her?

If you make a government contract, you have to carry it out, even if it does not suit you. If you give your word of honour to another, you will endure everything rather than violate it. In marriage, a woman gives her solemn word to God to be a devoted and faithful wife. Even though a husband is not all that his wife expected, God has her vow and she will have to answer to God Almighty for it. It will not excuse her to say that her husband has failed in his duty. She foresaw that possibility when she took him for better, for worse.

I do not mean to say that if conditions are intolerable there is no remedy. In such cases, consult a priest, and he will advise. But in many cases, the intolerable condition is of the wife's own making. A little generosity on her part, a little patience, a little consideration, would have saved her from it.

Many wives fail to realize that their husbands may have grievances as well as themselves. They expect all the consideration to be on their husbands' side. I have had wives come to me to tell me a tale of woe which would have softened granite. I have listened, and from their own statements have been able to point out to them how they were at fault themselves.

Sometimes I have had a woman come to complain of her husband, and her tale was so dreadful that I almost believed her when she said he was a devil. On sending for the husband and hearing his side, however, I concluded that she was the fiend. And yet the woman really felt that she was the aggrieved person.

When a wife gets into that state, it means torture for herself and for her husband. What is the best thing to do in such a case? Let her kneel down and say an earnest prayer to the Blessed Mother for patience. Let her offer up to Our Lord her injured feelings. That is a sacrifice which He will accept. His grace will flow into her soul, and she will find that peace reigns in her heart. When she becomes resigned and peaceful, it will react on her husband and make him peaceful and forbearing and lovable.

The grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony is sufficient to enable a wife to meet all the difficulties of the married state. But she must merit the grace by doing her part. Prayer, patience, the reception of the Holy Eucharist, will enable her to bear cheerfully the hardships of wedlock, and will, moreover, transform a dark prospect into a very cheerful outlook.

You must not think that because I advert to the disagreeable features of marriage that I am disparaging it. Not at all. The good side of marriage is so evident that it needs no eulogy. A good marriage takes care of itself and most

marriages are good. A wife who has ideal surroundings needs little advice. I am addressing wives who are not so fortunate.

To such, I say again that religion will prove their best friend when a situation becomes very hard or embarrassing. But if the advice I have given is followed, most of the pitfalls of marriage will be avoided.

If a wife lives mainly for her husband, he will live mainly for her. If she makes him her first concern, he will make her his, also. If she has regard for him in his tired moments when he is apt to be irritable, he will do the same for her. But if she gives tit for tat, she must not expect happiness as a wife.

Although the man is the head of the family, he will be a kindly and helpful head, his wife's protection and support and joy, if she but exerts her wonderful wifely influence properly. A woman has tremendous power over her husband if she shows herself the right kind of wife. The strongest man is a child under the influence of a loving wife.

If a wife wants to be the head of the family, let her begin by loving her husband and proving her love. Then, although he be the appointed head, she will be the real head and he will be glad to carry out her slightest wishes. But as a woman loves her peace and welfare, let her never try to boss her husband. Few men will take orders from their wives, but they will welcome suggestions and wishes lovingly expressed. A wife should not endeavour to dictate to her husband. Advise him, yes. Influence him, yes. And if she is very desirous of leading him, let her do so by true love. A husband will accept any leadership exercised over him in that way.

In early married life, man and wife will need to adapt themselves to each other. It is easier to accommodate oneself to the ways of another than to change another. I assure the wife that if she studies her husband's traits and has consideration for them, she is laying up for herself years of happiness. Moreover, she will make the home what it should be for her husband — the dearest place in the world.

But because a wife makes home attractive, she must not expect her husband to drop all his friends and associations. An occasional night at the club or an evening with So-and-so should not be objected to. A wife should try to go out with her husband, if he desires it, even though she must make an effort. The spirit of accommodation will go far to make both happy. Any wifely duty undertaken in the true spirit of faith, will, moreover, draw down God's blessing on their married life.

Your marriage is going to be almost wholly what you make it. Self-sacrifice, not selfishness, is the keystone of welfare in marriage. Wives who start out to make marriage serve their own personal ends usually come to grief. Let a wife forget herself in her desire to be helpful to her husband, and she will find that her own interests will be well served.

Furthermore, a wife has a special obligation to God. Through her cooperation and sacrifice the Ruler of the World perpetuates the human race. How dreadful for the woman whom He deigns to employ as an instrument in creating a new human being to pervert His measures for giving life, and make them a means of mere lustful indulgence! She shall stand judgment for the violation of one of His most serious commandments.

A Catholic wife, thank God, has too much reverence for God's law to violate it for the sake of pleasure or of avoiding inconvenience. Race suicide is such a detestable thing in God's sight that no truly Catholic-wife will be guilty of this dreadful sin.

In other ways, too, the Catholic wife has obligations to God. Her example as a practical Catholic will be a great help in encouraging her husband to live as a good Catholic man. And let me say that there is no surer way of having a husband all that he should be than to aid him to be a practical Catholic. I do not mean that she must preach at him — men hate that — but if he can see for himself the good effects of religion in her life, it will be more effective than many words.

Some wives who are frequent church-goers sometimes persist in running down their neighbours and in letting the home run itself. There is something the matter with their practice of religion if it does not make them better wives and better neighbours. Great harm can be done to religion by women who make a display of piety, and yet give scandal by their acts, to people who have little or no religion.

Let religious practice be sincere. A good test of its sincerity lies in how they act in the home. If a woman is not kind, forgiving, considerate and a good housewife, her religion, I am afraid, is only on the outside. God sees the heart.

He wants the Catholic wife to be a solace to her husband, a help to him as he tries to live as a good Catholic, and consequently an aid to his eternal salvation.

Where Faith is practical, it helps to smooth out the roughness which at times marks every career of life. It will do more than anything else to make a marriage here a prelude to that blessed union which will be the portion of good wives and husbands for all eternity in the Kingdom of God.

VI. SON

THE son to whom I am talking has passed the age of sixteen. He is beginning to feel self-reliant — I might even say, self-sufficient. Self-reliance is a good quality. Self-sufficiency, which the youth often calls "independence," is its foolish exaggeration. Such "independence," or self-sufficiency, wants its own way at every point. It thinks its own way of pleasure the main thing in life.

As citizens of the United States, we are among the most independent people in the world. But the very Declaration of Independence which proclaimed the men of this country independent of one government, declared a new government to which they were subject.

In regard to some things, we can never be independent. We cannot declare ourselves independent of God. We are always and everywhere His subjects and bound by His law. We cannot emancipate ourselves from the Ten Commandments or from Church law, as the Church is the voice of God. It is one of God's commandments to "Honour thy father and thy mother." Whether we are sixteen or sixty, that command holds.

What is it to honour father and mother? We know what it is to honour our country. Any word or deed which shows disrespect for country is a failure to honour our country. Any word or deed which shows disrespect for parents is a failure to honour them.

And God puts so much importance on reverence for our parents that He makes an offense against 'them' an offense against Himself. A son who does not respect his parents will not have God's blessing on his life. A son who does not respect his parents is only too likely to find later on, that his own children will not respect him.

The average youth knows in his heart that there is nothing worse than to show disregard for those who gave him life and cared for him during the years when he was not able to care for himself. There are many kinds of ingrates, and the worst of all is the ungrateful son. We owe more to our parents than to anyone else in the world. What ingratitude then, to repay their kindness and care by neglect, disobedience, opposition, and even defiance!

There is so much license now that the dishonouring of parents is becoming a menace. A Catholic young man is protected because his religion shows him his duty. Regard for father and mother is one of the fundamental points of religion. I suspect the religion of any young man who does not show the proper attitude towards his parents.

I admit that some parents make it very hard for sons to honour them. Mother and father in such cases must render their own accounts to God but their conduct does not justify a son in disregarding his duty to them. "Honour thy father and mother" holds in all cases. The question of who deserves honour as a man or woman does not change the son's duty to respect, protect and help his father and mother. Leave judgment to God. There are very few parents who do not deserve honour from their children. They live altogether for their children's welfare and even if there were no solemn command of God, a son would owe the greatest honour to his parents.

This honour is shown first of all by doing nothing which will cause them pain. If it is a choice between the son's pleasure and their pain, the son should drop his pleasure. Even if the pleasure be legitimate for others, it ceases to be so for the son in that case.

A son should take it for granted, ordinarily, that his parents are reasonable. They do not profit anything by restricting his pleasure. It is because they know conditions and consequences better than he does that they tell him to refrain from certain things. As a rule they are acting for his best welfare, and if he disregards them, he will generally regret it.

If at any time a youth feels that his parents are wrong and that he is right, I beg him to distrust his own judgment and be guided by them; if he differs with them, he must still be respectful. Some young men think that they know

more than their elders. They may be very bright, but they have not the experience of their parents. In any business, experience counts for more than anything else.

Besides honouring his parents by obedience, a son should also honour them by doing his part to support them. It is not a matter of choice but of duty, if his parents need him. Many young men nowadays spend all they earn on themselves.

Unless the son is a married man and needs his wages for his own family, he is obliged to do his part towards the support of his parents, if they need him. Who is to help them if not their own flesh and blood? Some day the son will realize this, perhaps. While it is time a young man should try to deserve to have good sons of his own by being a good son himself.

Even though a youth is not altogether directed by his parents in important matters, he should do them the honour of consulting them. The more he does this, less likely will he be to make mistakes.

A son's main duty, therefore, is obedience to his parents, and contribution to their support, when necessary. Moreover he will never say to father and mother anything to make them think that he does not care for their feelings; that can cut like a knife. Until he chooses a wife, no one should be closer to him than his parents.

A son has only to remember how, from his infancy, father and mother have denied themselves many things and much pleasure for him. It is not giving too much in return if the son denies himself for them, and if he adds the love of God to his natural motives, God will bless him when he may have children of his own. But above all, He will recompense the good son forever, when he returns to Him, as we all must, to receive the just due for our deeds in life.

In order that we may understand how the Lawgiver and Judge of mankind regards the duty of a son to his parents, let us listen to some of His declarations as given in Holy Scripture:

"Honour thy father and mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, that thou mayest live a Long time and it may be well with thee . . ." (Deut. 5:16).

"Honour thy father and forget not the groaning* of thy mother: Remember that thou hadst not been born but through them : and make a return to them, as they have done for thee" (Ecclus. 7:29, 30).

"He that honoreth his mother is as one that layeth up a treasure. He that honoreth his father shall have joy in his own children . . ." (Ecclus. 3:5,6).

"Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life ; And if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength, for the relieving of the father shall not be forgotten" (Ecclus. 3 :14) .

"Of what an evil fame is he that forsaketh his father: and he is cursed of God that angereth his mother" (Ecclus. 3 :18).

"A wise son maketh a father joyful; but the foolish man despiseth his mother" (Prov. 15:20).

"He that feareth the Lord, honoreth his parents ..." (Ecclus. 3:8).

By these declarations, God shows that a son cannot be acceptable to Him unless he honours his parents. He makes a son's regard for his parents the measure of his love for Himself. He declares that His blessings go out upon the son who treats with consideration the parents by whom God brought him into the world.

Considering how God regards a son's duty to his parents, how very foolish is it for a young man to be led astray into disregard for them by the prevalent bad example of those who have little or no religion or morals. Many young men nowadays ignore their parents altogether. God will ignore them. He has His own time and way of settling with undutiful sons.

All you have to do, in many cases, is to observe the career of those who have not honoured their parents, and you will see how the curse of God has rested upon them. But even if they should go, apparently, unchastised for their disregard of their parents, God's day of reckoning will come to every man in the end, and then the undutiful son will realize too late the dreadfulness of his sin.

Obedience to parents is not a question of whether we like it or not, but of our duty as marked out by God. A citizen may not like certain laws, but that does not exempt him from observing them. Parental authority is a legitimate

authority, sanctioned by God Himself. While a man is under his father's roof, he owes his parents honour and obedience. And, at home or abroad, he owes them consideration always.

As a son approaches manhood, he may have, of course, more and more latitude. Wise parents realize this. But no son ever has a latitude that will justify him in being disrespectful to them. A young man may at times forget himself and cause his parents sorrow, but he will, if he is a good son, know how to repair the mischief, and take the sting from the pain.

A young man may honestly differ with his parents on some point or other. But he will, if a good son, know how to differ without disrespect. An honest difference of opinion, expressed in a dutiful way, never detracts from due honour. It is difficult to say in some cases whether or not a son is justified in going against his parents. But it is not difficult to say that he does wrong if he does not take his stand with all due respect and reverence. There is a way of differing and showing honour, as there is a way of agreeing and showing dishonour.

The good son, in all he does, will be guided by the desire never to inflict pain on his parents. Acting on this principle, for the love of God, the Catholic son will be a joy to those who gave him life, and will merit God's blessing on his days here and hereafter.

A young man can have no greater distinction in this world than that of being a good son. People generally have the greatest admiration for the man who reverences his parents. No matter what success or position a man achieves in life, if he has not been a good son, he is a failure. Hereafter he will be rejected by the Father of us all if here he rejects His ordinances in regard to father and mother.

The young man who is true to his Catholic faith will be true to his parents and pleasing to God. Many young men in these days have cast aside religion. Such men go the way of their passions, which is always a selfish way.

It is the selfish young man who is disrespectful to his parents. Selfishness makes him consider only himself. Sad is the ending of such a one. The man who lives for himself, gets in the end nothing but misery. Even if there were no future life, the selfish man, the one who is always looking out for himself and overlooking the feelings and rights of others, tends to be solitary and despised and disgruntled and morally bankrupt. That is his fate here, usually. What it is hereafter, we may judge from the fact that in seeking himself, he has strayed from honour, virtue and God.

There are, I am ashamed to say, some young men nowadays who treat their parents with less regard and consideration than they do strangers. They literally break their parents' hearts. In some cases, a father even banishes a son from home on account of his disrespectful conduct. Or, not infrequently the pleading of a mother saves the son from such disgrace. If a young man knew what it costs a father to forbid him his presence, he would die rather than oblige him to take such extreme measures.

Some young men keep late hours, frequent questionable places, spend all their salary on their own pleasures, ignore their parents and in various ways, live as if there were no Fourth Commandment. They even add to their parents' sorrow by not going to Mass on Sunday and by neglecting Holy Communion. I may say that, in many cases, it is neglect of church that has caused them to turn out such ingrates.

Such sons are inviting God's judgments upon themselves. They are the young men who become the undesirables and wrecks of society. We cannot trifle with God and His laws. In His own time and way, He will show that if we disregard His ordinance, He will strike us dreadfully in His just indignation.

I am speaking very plainly on this point because I know that many young men at the present time are a scandal to Christianity by their conduct in the home. If you had seen the fathers and mothers whom I have beheld, broken-hearted on account of the waywardness of their children, you would understand why it is that so many of the young men of our day meet with failure and ruin. They have disregarded their parents, and God has abandoned them.

God does not always chastise ungrateful and disrespectful sons in this life. But this I will say, — He does not bless them, and without His blessing, a young man cannot have any real success in life. He may have a superficial prosperity, but it will never truly benefit him or his.

Thank God, the Catholic son who is faithful to his religion need have no fear of ever transgressing seriously in regard to his duty to his parents. The natural instinct of a son to love and honour his parents is fortified by the command of God and the example of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic son knows that, in obeying and reverencing his parents, he is performing an act of religion as well as of filial duty. He knows that every word or deed of his which tends to make his parents happy also rejoices the heart of God. That is why people are so frequently edified by the good Catholic son. That is why, in these days of irreligion, when so many young men slight their parents or treat them disdainfully, the Catholic young man, true to his Faith, reverences father and mother.

Show me the Catholic man who does not honour his parents, and I will show you a man whose Faith is dead or dying. A Catholic cannot go to the Sacraments and continue to despise God's ordinances in regard to parents. I am now speaking of the occasional lapses into which the best of us may fall, but of that state of habitual contempt and defiance which characterizes some sons in their intercourse with father or mother.

If young men understand aright and practise their religion, they will find that their filial and every other duty will be not only tolerable but agreeable. If they have home troubles which make their position as sons difficult, their religion will show them how to meet them, bravely and cheerfully. But their religion must be real, not merely nominal. Nominal religion is as serviceable as an engine without fuel.

Too many young men today have a religion that is nominal only. The commandment to honour father and mother is so disgracefully violated these days because many of the present generation have turned away from God, and in so doing, have turned away from natural virtue as well. For it is against nature to show contempt for those who gave us life.

Frequently, the penalty for rejecting God is to become a victim of sins against nature. Our nature is from God, and if we are not faithful to Him, He may let us degenerate into offenders against nature, as well as against God.

The Catholic son is, therefore, greatly blessed in his religion, if only he live up to it. The young man of today is in danger of going with the crowd. But the crowd will avail him little when he stands in judgment before the Son of God. Evil associates, no matter how many they may be, will not justify us before a worldly tribunal. Neither will a crowd save us when we appear before the eternal Judge.

If we live for that judgment, we shall live well. By living for that judgment, heaven and its blessedness will surely be ours.

VII. DAUGHTER

Next to mother, there is no word which recalls all that is hallowed so much as daughter. Whether it be parents who speak of her as their child, or brothers who call her sister, the daughter is one of God's special gifts and blessings to mankind.

The fathers and brothers who have been inspired or reclaimed by daughter or sister are legion. The mothers whose hours and cares have been lightened by a devoted daughter are beyond number. The devotion and sacrifice of the daughter for parents and brothers are proverbial. Next to a mother, the heart of the daughter reminds us most of the Heart of Christ.

It seems hardly necessary to say any words of advice to the Catholic daughter. Her devotion to family and Faith make us almost prefer to learn from her rather than to instruct her. Bowing down in respect and reverence, we offer her our gratitude for the example and inspiration she has been to us.

The Catholic daughter has indeed been one of the greatest glories of the Church, as well as of the Christian family. The heroism and sacrifice displayed by her in the home, and in work for God's needy ones elsewhere, have endeared her to the most callous. Catholic daughters have a wonderful power of making the world happier and better, and, thank God, they have exerted it most generously.

The daughter's first field of operation is the home, and her first duty is to her parents. Nothing except a spiritual call from God should be permitted to take permanent precedence of home duties. And what a beautiful field she has for her activities! She has it in her power to be the greatest comfort to father and mother. That in itself must be a wonderful joy to a nature so exquisitely good as hers. Also, she has an influence over her brothers second only to that of their mother. Good daughter and good sister, what a career of usefulness, cheer and inspiration is yours! But what

an opportunity in life has been missed by the girl who is not a good daughter! And generally, a girl who is not a good daughter has given up this wonderful opportunity for a bauble.

A young woman will never get the equivalent outside for what she loses in the home. If through frivolity or vanity or waywardness, she gets a little passing pleasure at the cost of turning her back on home duties, she is simply indulging in froth. If for the sake of amusement or sociability she disregards the advice and welfare of her parents, she is weaving a garment of unhappiness for herself. No young woman ever purchases contentment by having her own way against the reasonable wishes of her parents.

As a girl approaches closer to womanhood, she may more and more decide for herself in many things, but the more she makes her decision conform to her parents' views, the more, generally speaking, is she consulting her own welfare. Besides, as a good daughter, she will be giving her parents the best proof of her love and loyalty.

Some young women act as if they owed neither obedience, nor respect nor submission to their parents. The path of these undutiful daughters is filled with thorns, and ends frequently in misery. A short period of what they call independence may exact a life-long penalty. Beyond estimate is the number of women who wear out their lives in wretchedness because they had their fling in youth. I speak of serious matters. It is easier to begin than to stop short and many a silly girl who preferred the attention and flattery of outsiders to the wholesome advice of her parents, has spent her middle and old age repining.

It is sad enough if a career is wretched even though one has done one's duty. But when wretchedness is the result, of one's disregard of duty, it causes inexpressible sorrow. Disasters which occur to the girl who has been dutiful and faithful have in them the bright rays of sacrifice and loyalty. But the girl who seeks her own silly pleasure regardless of her parents' prohibitions and unmindful of their happiness and welfare, is accumulating trouble for herself. And she will soon learn that the trouble which is of one's own making is the hardest of all to bear.

Some girls fancy that their duty lies everywhere except at home. They flit about here and there, and have time and effort for everything except what their mothers require of them. The girl who judges so poorly or chooses so badly that she thinks everything is more important than her home, is just the girl who never achieves anything in life. Notice for yourself how often this type of young woman is not prized in her social set, nor considered valuable in her work.

Perhaps this type of girl thinks that by frequenting clubs, parties, and dances she will make some young man pay marked attention to her. But the thoughtful young man is too sensible to offer his affections to the girl who is always away from her home. These runabouts either do not get married, or they wed husbands of their own type. And then trouble begins!

Other girls are willing to seek their pleasure even in questionable places of amusement. Public dance halls and pavilions have lured many thoughtless girls to life-long unhappiness. Young women should know that men, as a rule, have no good opinion of a girl they meet in such a place. Even men who go to these resorts for purposes of their own, do not want to find their sisters or sweethearts there. A young woman might possibly make a marriage by frequenting places of this character, but the chances are that it will be a marriage which she will rue. If a girl, by being what a good daughter should be, does not attract a man, it is far better for her never to marry. The unmarried daughter of today can have a busy, and useful, and happy life. Marriage is not the only hinge on which happiness swings.

As a matter of fact, it is the good daughter that usually wins the good husband. She has the very qualities that stir the deepest feelings in a good man. The flashy, runabout girl attracts attention, yes, but it is not the attention which makes for happy wedlock. One reason for unfortunate marriages is just this license and vanity of girls, alas, too common at present. I beg of you, young women, to put your self-respect and dignity above a short career of amusement and vanity.

The good Catholic daughter who honours her parents and follows their advice is safeguarded against the risks of folly and waywardness. It is one way God has of rewarding the good daughter. The girl who flings reverence for her parents aside to claim her own way — ^harmless though it be at first — will find herself on a dangerous road. Before long she will lose control and then — the price she must pay for her waywardness is terrible.

Not the least of the consolations of a good daughter is the fact that she is making her parents happy. In their happiness her own becomes manifold. Devotion to them becomes a pleasure because she sees that their only thought is for her and her brothers and sisters.

But if she is not a good daughter! I dread to think of the consequences to her. Some girls break their parents' hearts by their self-will and license. Eventually their own hearts are broken. But worst of all, they are living in sin. For deliberate misbehaviour towards parents is a sin. A daughter who died in that sin would appear before God as one who had turned her back on Him in life. It is treason to God to ignore His commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother."

I do not speak of thoughtless acts of disobedience, sometimes committed out of carelessness, but of that downright insulting disobedience which some girls continually display. The good daughter will be shocked to learn that there are girls of this kind. The good daughter finds so much pleasure and comfort in doing her duty to her parents, she has so much dread of sin, that she cannot understand the misbehaviour of the bad daughter. Some daughters are bad because they fail to realize the mischief they are doing. But you may be sure that if dishonouring one's parents were not a dreadful thing, God would not condemn it so terribly.

In present times, young women are more and more drawn from the home by business. In many cases this is necessary. Modern methods have substituted women for men in many kinds of work and have carried woman's home industries into the factories and shops. The effect has been a change in the manners and attitude of women. Contact with the business world and the debasing nature of rush hour transportation have tended to spoil, if not destroy that charm which we call womanliness. The new boldness and self-sufficiency are visible not only to outsiders, but at times even in the home. It is a great pity. Anything which tends to lessen the exquisite qualities of womanhood should be avoided by every possible means.

The good daughter who goes out to business will make special efforts to prevent the manners of office or factory from entering her home. Just because she has an income of her own and considerable liberty, she will not be a bit less reverential to her father and mother.

The danger to girls in the business world is that they may lose the reserve which is their greatest protection. No matter who the man or what the circumstances, a Catholic girl should never permit anything anywhere which may be in the slightest way against womanly reserve and Christian modesty. Fidelity to her religion is her greatest safeguard.

In all walks of life there are men with little or no religion, who are ready to do all in their power to mislead a young woman. As she values honour and happiness, she should make no concessions to these unprincipled men. If in doubt about anything, she should go, as a good Catholic daughter, to her mother or to her confessor, and she will thus avoid the pits into which so many fall, often, alas, never to rise again to what they were before.

A girl's religion and her mother are her best friends. Not that I leave out father or brother, but there are certain helps and preventives which religion and mother are best qualified to provide.

A good Catholic daughter will find joy, too, in serving her home. Her love and devotion will not hesitate to take the form of house duties — according to her strength and time. If she is a real business woman, she will recognize duties at home which for her own sake, she cannot afford to omit. Every woman is almost certain to see the day when all her knowledge and expertness at housekeeping and cooking will be a valuable asset to her.

The girl who marries, not knowing how to cook, will be a dreadful imposition on her husband, unless perhaps, she marries a millionaire. Many a marriage has been made a tragedy because of bad meals. And even the girl who does not marry, will need to know the art of cooking. What of the time when her mother comes to depend on her to take her place? Or suppose a brother turns to her for help when his wife has been taken? Every girl, no matter what her place or position, should know how to take hold and manage a home. I have known charming girls who considered it beneath them to bend to home tasks. Later on, as wives, it was a source of regret to them.

No matter what our station in life, we do not know where its ups and downs may find us ten months or twelve years hence. Poor food or badly cooked meals may be the opening wedge which will split asunder marriage happiness. A hungry man with nothing palatable to satisfy his appetite, is in condition to find fault with everything. And fault finding usually ends in family discord, and too often in disaster.

In conclusion, my dear young woman, I wish to say that your happiness here and your blessedness hereafter are bound up with your devotion and reverence for your parents. Your influence in the home and outside of it is incalculable. Indeed, it is not too much to say that society at large will be what you make it. If daughters were all they should be, the world would be a far better place to live in. A good girl is a good influence everywhere. What your influence should be in your own circle, you know better than I can tell you.

Leave other girls, therefore, to their own duties and spheres of influence. Your responsibility is your own. No one has finer opportunities than the Catholic daughter, and, thank God, no one, for the most part, employs her opportunities better. The good Catholic daughter is the pride and joy of her parents, the inspiration of her brothers and husband, and the best hope for a renewed world.

VIII. DANGERS TO YOUNG MEN

Every period of life has its pitfalls. But no time is so dangerous as that of youth. A young man feels that he is more or less his own master. He also feels that he is very capable of managing his own affairs. He is full of life. The future looks bright. He has great confidence in himself. Self-confidence is a good thing, but not if it displaces confidence in the wisdom of others.

And that is the very thing which ordinarily happens with a young man, and it is the main source of danger to him. How many men of middle age have said that they would give all they possess to have known at twenty what they knew at forty! Yet, in spite of this, the man at twenty fancies that he has no need of advice or direction. The man who has that assurance is the very one who needs advice most.

If a young man can be brought to see the benefit of advising with his parents, he has escaped half the dangers ahead. I do not say he must always act on their advice, for he may have tendencies and capabilities which they fail to appreciate. But ordinarily their advice will be sound and the best to follow.

A young man sees visions. Life to him is one brilliant prospect. A heart to heart talk with parents will often dispel the unrealities of his vision and disclose the substantial realities. My first word to young men is they should have full confidence in themselves, and yet distrust themselves. That looks like a contradiction, does it not?

Napoleon always planned to win. He also made every provision for retreat, in case of defeat. Let a young man have confidence in himself, but also realize that distrust of self is the true associate of self-confidence. This self-assurance, joined with self-distrust, will also be the young man's greatest protection against the peculiar dangers which beset the path of youth. He should have confidence in his power to overcome temptation. Otherwise, he is defeated beforehand. But he should also have that distrust of self which warns him against rushing into temptation.

No man is strong of body, no matter what his constitution may be, if he does not eat what preserves health and avoid what ruins it. Because a man is strong, he cannot trust himself to eat tainted meat. Any man who is so sure of his strength that he does not distrust dangerous food has not self-confidence, but self-disregard.

There are certain things in life more deadly for young men, no matter how virtuous they may consider themselves, than poisoned meat is for a healthy and strong man. There is such a thing as poisoned pleasure. Keep away from it!

Sometimes we read of persons poisoned by something they ate at a banquet. They enjoyed the banquet immensely. A few hours later they were dangerously ill, or perhaps dead. There are pleasures of life which are tainted. They cause illness of mind and body, and often death. But we cannot be taken unawares by them, as men at a banquet. We are warned. Tainted pleasure is labelled.

Every pleasure of life that is forbidden by God's commandments is labelled poisonous. Sin is that label. The man who wants to disregard that label, may do so. But he must not blame anyone but himself if he meets with fatal results.

If we should see a warning flag outside a house, in a neighbourhood where there was smallpox, we would keep away. God puts a warning flag on every pleasure that is dangerous to the life of the soul. It is the warning flag called Sin. Is a thing a sin? Keep away from it. Otherwise you will rue your action. You may have what you call a good time, but you will pay for it.

The government and the press have of late been warning men of the dreadful dangers of certain sexual indulgences. God gives a better warning. He gives the only warning that is really effective. He tells men that if they do certain

things they violate His orders — they disobey the Ruler of the world. They commit sin, and if they die in sin, they will lose their souls.

That is God's preventive, and it is the best on all occasions. Instruction and enumeration of diseases and disasters which usually follow impure practices will not stop them. Men will take a chance. That is why nowadays when we are better informed on sexual consequences than ever before, there is more sexual delinquency than ever before.

God knows man better than he knows himself. He provides the best means of safeguarding virtue and welfare. He says: Thou shalt not do it. And He adds that the man who violates His command, will lose his soul. Because he has God's help, a Catholic young man has greater protection in life than any other.

The Catholic knows that he who loves God must also respect and reverence Him. The reverence which he has for God makes him regulate his life as God directs. Those who have no faith look upon God as a benevolent somebody who may be treated with less regard than they have for their fellow man.

If the government orders us to do something, we must respect the order. It will not do to say we love the government while we disobey it. Nor will it do to say that the government is good, and that it is too kind to punish for defying its orders.

It is all nonsense, this prattle about God being too good to punish transgressions of His law. It is worse than prattle, for it leads to the utter disregard of God's law, and to the ruin of body and mind here and the ruin of the soul hereafter. Your father loved you when he punished you for your faults. He punished you because he loved you. God is not only good. He is also just. What a weakling He would be if He allowed His creatures to despise His authority!

Some young men who want to have their fling imagine that they can leave God out of the reckoning. But ask them at sixty. Even if there were no hereafter, the wages of sin is death. Nature, which is God's servant, takes an awful toll for transgressions of God's law.

But I leave that out. I am talking to Catholic young men. They know that Christ died on the Cross to save them from the consequences of sin. They know therefore that sin is a dreadful thing. That is enough. That is more than they could learn from all the lectures and instructions on sex matters which they could get in a year.

The love and fear of God have been sufficient to make generations of pure youths during all the ages of Christianity. How much sex instruction do they get in Ireland? And yet there is not a purer people in all the world. They fear God and love Him.

Everyone who truly loves God, fears Him — fears to offend Him. The reason so many young men are going to the devil is that they do not fear God. Neither do they love Him. They may say they do, but will they insult one whom they love? And what is it but an insult to God, deliberately to do what He declares to be most hateful to Him?

It only requires one truth rightly understood to make us virtuous. It is not necessary to know all the whys and wherefores of virtue. It is enough to know that God Almighty commands. If the commander of an army gives an order, the soldier has not to be told the why and wherefore. So it is sufficient for the young man to know that God commands him to avoid certain sexual indulgences. Even if no harm followed, the command is entitled to obedience.

And, thank God, with Catholic young men it is sufficient. That is why a Catholic keeps away from certain places, no matter how many irreligious young men may frequent such resorts. I know it is a terrible temptation to a young fellow to see his companions going the way of sin. But remember that numbers do not make an argument for a thing. If ten men or a thousand jumped from the Brooklyn Bridge, that would not make it right. If ten or a thousand ate tainted meat, that would not make it less detrimental for each one. So numbers do not count with God. Do not forget that.

Numbers are the young man's big temptation in many things. He must make up his mind now that a crowd does not make a wrong thing right. Each man stands judgment with God on his own account.

Reverence for God is the young man's greatest safeguard as he goes through life. It alone will carry him securely over the most dangerous paths. Reverence for God will also make him avoid the dangerous spots along the road. It is not safe to play with dynamite. Passions require only a spark under certain conditions, to cause an explosion. Keep away from the spark.

God has given certain passions and instincts for a wise purpose. Man is drawn strongly and agreeably towards woman for the purpose of honourable marriage. If man were without these passions and instincts, he would never marry. In that case, the human family would perish. Man is supposed to master his passions in accordance with God's law. If he does not master his passions, they will run away with him.

No man is tempted beyond his strength. God says it. But man must do his part. If you give an unruly horse too much rein, he will run away with you. And so the passions. Either you are master or they. If they are in the saddle, God help you! If you have strong passions, God gave them to you, and He also has given you control of them. If they get beyond you, it is because you let them.

It is silly to hear young men say that they cannot help such and such a vice. They cannot help it because they do not, or did not, want to. God does not impose an impossible law. It may be hard at times to observe it, but it is hard at times to observe the law of the government. It is hard at times for a soldier to carry out orders. But that does not excuse him if he fails. So we should never say that God's law is too much for us.

The sexual instinct is so strong in men generally because it is God's way of bringing man and woman to be husband and wife. The sexual instinct in a man goes out to women generally. But it may be indulged only towards the one woman who is his wife, and has won his love in honourable marriage. Any sexual indulgence outside matrimony is condemned solemnly by Almighty God.

The sexual instinct is nature's means of establishing the family and continuing the human race. To employ it otherwise is to disobey the orders of nature's God.

Suppose a messenger received a sum of money from a merchant with orders to deposit it in the bank. If the messenger used that money otherwise than as directed, he would be a thief. If he spent it to suit himself, even if what he bought were serviceable, he would be a thief and condemned as such. He might like very much to have a good time with that money, but if he used it for his own purposes, he would pay the penalty by arrest and imprisonment. If he said he was tempted, the court would ignore his plea.

So with us. God has given us certain instincts for a definite purpose. If we use them otherwise than as He directs, we incur the penalty of a transgressor of God's law. No matter what anyone or any crowd may say, it is wrong and false if it goes against what God commands. There are many young men without any religion who are a law to themselves. We must let them alone. They have their responsibility with God. We have ours. And we shall find before long that their way is the way of destruction, even in this world, the destruction of everything that really counts in life.

The sooner a young man meets the girl he respects and loves, and marries her, the better, generally speaking. An early marriage well-made is a great blessing to a young man. But a young man should never keep constant company with a girl whom he does not hope to marry. It is wrong for many reasons.

First of all, it is not fair to a good girl, and that is the only kind of girl he should associate with. It gives her false hopes and keeps her from other prospects. Suppose someone should act thus with his sister! In the second place, company keeping is dangerous unless it is inspired by the reverence and true love which leads to marriage. Protracted courtship is the source of great evils. If, after honourable association with a girl for a reasonable time, a young man realizes that she will not make a good life's companion, let him cease his attentions to her.

Again I repeat it, a man should seek something more than looks in the girl whom he hopes to make his wife. Her traits, her disposition, and above all, her normal and ordinary conduct are important. When a man meets a girl who is suitable to his character and whose love he may win, the sooner he marries her the better.

Marriage steadies a young man, gives him ambition, and removes him from the temptations which beset the path of the average youth. Unless he has family obligations which stand in the way of marriage, or intends to embrace a life which requires celibacy, his normal career will be aided and safeguarded by a good marriage.

A good marriage! Ah, that is the point. And it will stand a good chance of being good if the young man tries to carry out the teachings and directions of Faith. Even for welfare here, there is nothing so helpful as religion. And for eternal welfare, which after all is life's main issue, religion is indispensable.

A young man who is a practical Catholic has the best key to welfare in this life and in the life beyond. Dangers to young men are many and insidious these days. Human nature, left to itself, will not ordinarily carry a man through

unharmful. That is why God comes to our aid by the Sacraments. No matter how weak we may be, we can make ourselves stronger than any temptation by the right use of the Sacraments.

God says we shall not be tempted above our strength. But He supposes that we take the nourishment He has provided to make us strong. We should not leave the Blessed Eucharist, the food of the strong, to old age, when the passions have run their course of ruin. A fiery horse needs a firm rein. In youth passions are a fiery steed. The Sacraments give us the spiritual strength to hold a firm rein on them. Unless a man controls them by God's law, they will rush him over a precipice. Rightly controlled, they aid him to attain success and peace.

The passions serve a noble purpose. So does a surgeon's knife. But the knife must be in a firm and skilled hand. Otherwise the operation brings ruin instead of relief. So the passions. Controlled by the Catholic man skilled in God's ways and the use of His holy Sacraments, the passions become the motor of splendid achievements.

If a chauffeur guides his power properly, it drives his car safely and for long distances. But let him release control, and the machine will dash to its destruction and his death. The passions are a tremendous power. Controlled by God's directions, they become man's best agent of efficiency. Uncontrolled, they become his ruin.

Young man, follow Jesus Christ, and not His enemy, Satan. As you go through life, you are under the leadership of Christ or Satan. There is no middle course. You are either with God, or against Him. If you are with God here you will be with Him hereafter. To be with Him here means that at times you must fight, you must do violence to yourself, you must subdue your unruly passions.

But the issue will be eternal victory. With St. Paul you will be able to say "I have fought a good fight. As for the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day."

IX. WOMEN AND DRESS

The purpose of dress is twofold, to protect the body and to ornament it. Some women nowadays pervert the use of dress.

It is the nature of woman to be attractive. But her greatest attraction should be her modesty. Any woman can attract by a certain style of dress, or the lack of dress, but it is not the attraction that a Christian woman cares for.

A man whose love is worth having is repulsed by the woman of that kind, whose appeal is only to his lower nature. He may use her as a toy, but he will not love her. The very men who take every concession that a woman will make, respect her less the more she yields. They will amuse themselves with her, but they will not marry her, ordinarily.

God put the instinct of attractiveness in women in order to induce honest love and marriage. The way some women dress now induces only dishonourable love. In fact, it is wrong to call it love at all. It is just passion, sex passion, and implies no esteem, no honest purpose, no idea whatever of true affection.

In women the instinct to be attractive is very strong. But whenever that instinct is gratified by a lack of self-respect, it acts as a boomerang. Any woman who attracts attention or admiration at the cost of modesty is committing moral suicide. She is doing harm to herself and others.

Do not think that I speak thus because I am a priest. It is not only religious people who lament the indecency of modern dress. Physicians, statesmen and moralists join in the condemnation of the present immodest fashions. They condemn them because of their positive harm.

Dr. Foveau de Courmelles, one of the best known physicians in Europe, declares that some of the worst evils now confronting civilized nations may be laid at the door of the feminine craze for indecent dress. Among other things, he says: "Woman's clothing has reduced itself to the most simple expression by its scantiness. She is dressed in these days when she is undressed." What a dreadful indictment by a man of the world!

The unusual always attracts. If a woman concedes more than propriety allows, of course she will attract notice. She may even get a certain sort of admiration, the admiration that spells ruin.

Man has a twofold nature, animal and spiritual. An immodestly dressed woman may win the admiration of man's animal nature; but it is a brutal admiration, not only not worth having, but positively dangerous to both man and woman. A decent woman does not want the admiration which comes from sacrificing her modesty. And a decent man does not want to associate with a woman who disregards modesty.

If a woman wins a man by any improper display of her person, she will regret it. Such a man will treat her in accordance with his brutal instincts. A marriage resulting from such admiration will be a matter of lust, and not love. Lust is cruel, and when it is too late, the woman will realize it.

If all this is so, you say, why is it that in society there is so much immodesty in dress? And I ask you, why is it that in society there are so many divorces and separations, and so many charges of cruelty and incompatibility and so many tragedies?

Unfortunate marriages are frequently the consequence of merely sensual attraction. Nothing fades so fast as the attraction founded on passion. That is one reason why there are so many regrettable marriages now. The scandalous dress of some women exposes them to lustful eyes, generates false love, and lays the foundation for lifelong misery.

It is because the Catholic Church seeks the true welfare of women that it insists so much on modesty in dress. The womanly qualities which attract the true love of a man are those not dependent on an unseemly display of the person. And if a woman does not win the true love of a man, she had better a thousand times remain single.

Extremes in dress not only submit woman to the wrong sort of admiration, but moreover, make her the means of the temptation and downfall of man. Women, as a rule, are not aware of the effect which an improper display of their person has on men. Unfortunately it is a fact that, although a man may be disgusted at the first sight of an improperly dressed woman, if he gazes at her he experiences emotions as sinful as they are alluring.

A woman, therefore, who dresses without Christian propriety becomes an instrument of Satan. She does his work. She helps to pull down man to an ignoble and sinful level. Good men have frequently remarked that the way women dress nowadays is a constant temptation even for virtuous men.

In Catholic times and countries modesty in dress is characteristic of women. And that is so of true Catholics everywhere. The Catholic Church, realizing the vital necessity of safeguarding virtue, has always taken a firm stand against lascivious dress. But with the spread of irreligion among the nations, the voice of the Church has not been heeded outside her own children, with the result that fashion has gone mad. Paganism, with the added lure of modern devices, is rampant.

Dress is now frequently designed to excite sexual desire. Exposure goes as far as possible, within the law. Indeed, it has even gone beyond the law of civic decency, as we see by the crusades in many places against it. In some social sets, the indecency of dress is so extreme that if it were on the street, it would subject the offender to arrest. And the morals prevailing in these circles are quite in keeping with the indecent styles.

The pity of it is that Catholics are affected by all this. Modesty of style depends somewhat on the custom of time and place. The moderately short skirt which shocked some years ago is not noticed now. The Catholic young woman will know how to keep a few steps behind the pace set by extreme styles. Even non-Catholics expect the highest propriety in Catholic women. Certain styles are incompatible with modesty always and everywhere.

Fashion is set mostly by Society. By degrees the manners and dress which prevail there tend to make their way among the middle and lower classes. Persons in society, from their early years, are so accustomed to certain conventionalities that they are not at all affected by what would greatly shock others. Moreover, in society, there is a marked restraint, the result of education and environment. Even so, the effect of immodest dress there is deplorable.

But when this same license of dress is transferred to the ordinary walks of life, the result to morals is most detrimental. And it becomes positively ruinous when it pervades certain ranks. When license of dress takes hold of factory girls, or clerks in stores, or office girls, it makes of them so many proximate occasions of sin to those with whom they associate.

I can understand how a flighty girl may indulge in such license of dress through vanity and ignorance of its sinful effects, but how a Christian mother will tolerate it in her daughter is incomprehensible. Mothers have had experience with the pitfalls of life. They know that with every precaution there is nevertheless constant danger for their daughters. Yet they allow those dear to them to risk their worldly happiness and their immortal souls for the sake of fashion.

Of course I know that some mothers will say that they cannot help it. If they cannot, let them blame themselves. The first time that a girl attempts to wear a dress that improperly exposes her is the time to act.

I know a man who took the right kind of action, not only with his daughter, but also with his wife. He had arranged to take them to the opera on the girl's birthday. The mother, yielding to the girl's vanity, had allowed her to get a very extreme dress. It was worn the first time this night. When the father saw his daughter, he was shocked.

"Mary," he said to her, "tell your mother I wish to see her."

The mother came presently. He privately told her that their daughter's dress was unbecoming a Catholic girl.

"But, dear," she replied, "everybody is wearing that style."

"Everybody is not our daughter, mother dear," he answered. "We are responsible for her, not for everybody. I will not go out with her in that dress. You may go to the opera with her if you like. I have done my part."

The mother, for a moment, was dumbfounded.

Then the tears came to her eyes, and she said: "God bless you, John, you have expressed what was in my heart, but I did not have the courage to speak out."

That is it, the weakness of mothers. Men do not like to interfere in these matters. It is the mother's place. A girl will not be a bit more extreme than the mother allows. But you cannot permit your daughter all sorts of license while she is growing up, and then expect to control her when she is a young woman. No. You must begin from the beginning. Let your daughter see by your own dress and ideas what will be proper for her.

Of course I know that many excuses will be given for indecency in dress. Some girls say that they cannot spare the time or money to have a dress made, but must buy it ready made, and they can only get what is in style. But many of the dresses that are objectionable, are not obtained at the stores, but are made to order.

Moreover, if the store style is extreme, it is because the demand for it is great. If Catholic girls insist on the proper style it will be found on the counters. In most of our cities, the Catholic trade is worth having, and stores will supply that trade. But even if the stores are to blame, which I do not concede, a modest girl will know how to make a modest alteration.

Why should Catholics take up the fashions of those who are living merely for the life that is passing? Our forefathers suffered confiscation, imprisonment, exile and death for the Faith. Were they all fools? Millions of martyrs endured indescribable torture for the Faith. Were they wrong? Is what Christ says true, or not? "What does it profit to gain the whole world and lose your soul?" The life is more than the body, and the soul is more than life. Because there is a sort of Christianized paganism abroad, are we going to be swallowed up by it?

In the early days of Christianity, the followers of Christ had to take their stand. If they had not, there would have been no Christian civilization. And are not we going to take a stand to preserve what was established in their blood!

If our religion is worth anything, it is worth making sacrifices for. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and only the violent bear it away. If we want to be followers of Christ here, we must do violence to our licentious tendencies. The Religion of Christ means restraint, a restraint on anything that tends to lead us astray. But it is a restraint for our true welfare.

A man crossing a precipice on a plank would not complain that a railing was a restraint. It restrains him, yes, but from instant destruction. So modesty restrains from immorality. Immorality leads to a hell on earth, as well as to hell hereafter. Any victim of impurity will admit that.

Indecent dress is a torch to inflame the passions of men, passions bad enough without adding fuel to the fire. And that is what young women do by their extremely lascivious dress. Some of them know it. Others do not.

Some parents find it hard to instruct their children on these matters. It is hard. It is hard for me to touch on this subject. But it is better for me to do it beneficially than to let them remain in ignorance or learn through harmful sources.

The way some girls dress, you would think that the object of life was just to amaze people. I am not setting myself against attractive dress, but against the improprieties of dress. A girl should dress well. A man is not likely to respect a girl who is carelessly or unbecomingly dressed.

Charm of person is one of God's gifts to women. That charm is not lost, but enhanced, by modest dress. Any charm of person shown at the expense of decent dressing detracts from women in the estimation of honourable men. And who will court the esteem of any but the honourable?

Attractiveness which comes from good taste in dressing is a desirable quality in a woman. Men admire very much a girl who shows individuality and character in her dress. A girl who dresses well is apt to do other things well. Fine taste in dress is one of the best gifts a woman can possess.

But when a girl, instead of winning admiration by exquisite taste in dress, does so by vulgar display of her person, she shows not only her vulgarity, but also her incapability of dressing intelligently and decorously. A girl of brains and taste does not have to depend upon impropriety to make herself charming.

I might go into details, but there is no need of it. All know what I mean. There is an instinct which tells one when one oversteps. I have known women who pretended that their extreme style was perfectly proper, but on the approach of a really proper person, they hastily covered themselves with a shawl or wrap. When I say proper persons, I do not mean pruders or so-called church people. I mean men and women of the world who realize that woman is too sacred to become a mere object of lustful admiration.

It requires no talent or art to be licentious. It is no credit to anyone. If a young woman wants to be attractive, let her do it in a way that implies the possession of good qualities. Her manners, her mental equipment, afford fine means for displaying her charms.

Such charms are distinctive. Immodest charms are vulgar. They are the property of any woman who cares little enough about herself to show them. A young woman, I am sure, desires to be distinctive, "to be somebody." She can be that, and at the same time be a good Catholic woman, without in any way aping the fashion of false and fatal fads. Fashions which are now quite accepted in some social sets were, a few years ago, the stock in trade of the demi-monde. Is that not enough to show the significance of such styles? Does that not show their inherent purpose?

When we consider the seriousness of life, and it is serious even for the butterflies of fashion, as they learn too late, it is amazing how we multiply misery for ourselves. Even when a good man or woman is on guard and takes every precaution, it is not easy to continue virtuous. Why then make it harder for oneself and for others by playing into the hands of Satan?

By all means, let us cultivate the niceties of life. Let us endeavour to be exquisite in dress, charming in manners and person. But above all, we should remember that life is only the path to eternity. For the sake of a few flowers by the wayside, we should not wander from the way that leads to the blessedness of life eternal.

Sin comes too high, it costs too much. It asks us to give everlasting life for the pleasures of a moment. It would have us exchange the inheritance which the Son of God came on earth to give us for the deceptive promises held out by Satan. Even in this life, the wages of sin is death. And hereafter!

X. WOMEN AND ORNAMENTATION

I know I am now on dangerous ground. I can only hope that my readers will hold their feelings in check until they have finished this chapter. Then they will see that I am their friend.

An Irish girl who had returned to the Old Country from America some years ago, opened the eyes of her former companions by her dress and looks. What most astonished them was her ability to have cheeks and hair of far finer hue than graced her before crossing the ocean. Gradually the secret leaked out.

At first everybody was shocked. But one or two girls got the idea that it was not so bad after all. If they could wear fancy gloves to bedeck their hands, why could they not bleach their hair or colour their cheeks to improve their looks?

The necessity of dealing with the subject of this chapter may appear from the following regulation issued by the office of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad to its several hundred clerks and stenographers: "Skirts shall be a modest length — the interpretation of the term modest to be at the discretion of the head of the woman's welfare bureau. No more rouge whatsoever, and powder to be used only in moderation." One or two tried it, but their mothers made short work of their logic.

However, a certain girl who was altogether unattractive, if not positively homely, had a strong desire to try the new art of ornamentation. She had a scruple about its being sinful. Like a good girl in doubt, she asked her confessor if it was sinful to paint. The priest had no notion of any kind of painting going on in his parish except house painting, and so he said:

"What's that, Mary, I did not understand you."

Hesitatingly, she repeated: "Is it sinful to paint, Father?"

"Why, no, my child," he replied. "Sure, your father and brother have been painters these many years."

"I don't mean that kind of painting," she said.

"Well, what kind do you mean, Mary?"

"I mean painting yourself, Father."

The priest reflected a moment, and then said slyly, with a look which indicated that he realized that she was very homely: "It is not a sin for you to paint, Mary."

That was enough for Mary. She never gave painting another thought.

Painting is an admission of its need. We do not paint oak. Cheap wood may require painting. Fine wood only requires polishing. Be as clean as you like. But do not paint. Before you "tut tut," and say that I am talking of something I know nothing about, hear me out, please.

I know all the reasons that women give to justify painting. The best reason I have heard is that of a married woman, who must go out with her husband when she is fatigued and wants to appear presentable for his sake. Well, Mrs. Married Woman, ask your husband, since it is for his sake you do it, if he wants you to paint for his sake. That is my reply to such persons. Since when has it become a discredit to be weary or less, than perfect in health?

Others justify painting by the requirements of dress. They say that, to wear the prevailing styles, which are all fashioned for those not on in years, it is necessary to be youthful. Girlish dress and faded or wrinkled cheeks do not match. But since when has it become necessary for a matron to be dressed as a maiden? or for an elderly woman to be garbed as a school-girl?

"Nonsense, nonsense," I hear you say, "stick to your own affairs, and let the women manage theirs." Well, let us see. You will admit that this is very much an affair of mine, when I tell you that I have seen more homes wrecked by false impressions created by artificial appearances, than by almost any other single cause.

Let me exemplify. Take a young woman whose beauty plays an important part in winning a man's regard. Even if that beauty is genuine, it is a poor basis for married happiness. But suppose that her beauty is artificial. Suppose that when she becomes his wife, she appears plain and ordinary without her veneer! Her husband has been tricked by camouflage! He has gotten a counterfeit! He married her for her looks; his so called love is changed into disgust, and then trouble begins.

If you buy and pay for an oak table, and find that it is only painted pine, you will be incensed. You will send back the table and claim your money. A Catholic man cannot send back his painted wife! We hear a lot about incompatibility nowadays, and cruelty, and neglect. In many cases, the wife has brought it on herself by her pre-marriage deceptions.

I beg a young woman who is contemplating marriage to avoid even the slightest deception. Either she is naturally attractive to the young man, or she is not. If she is, she does not need deceptive aids. If she is not, she is like a merchant disposing of goods under false pretences. I beg of her not to create a mistaken notion in the man who will be intimately associated with her all her life.

Now it is evident why it is my business to touch on this matter. Peace and welfare here are concerned, and too often, eternal welfare also. For pre-marriage deception may be the cause of sinful accusations and quarrels, and not infrequently of life-long estrangements.

Whatever a man's response to a painted face may be, deep in his heart he has an aversion to it. The girl who paints loses some of his respect. I have heard men talk on this matter. Moreover, since a man knows that painting is generally an indication that a woman is older than she cares to admit, he wonders whether she is concealing not only years but defects. A painted face makes a man suspicious.

So much in regard to the effect of the painted woman on men, when they know from other sources that she is a good woman. If they do not know her very well, they may easily put her in the class with those who use paint as an aid to their vile profession.

Sometimes you will hear girls justify painting by saying that people in society do it. Believe me, young women, the ladies of real society do not do it. I have had opportunity of observing women at social functions in circles of culture, and the women who painted were the exceptions. That some society women dress immodestly, and paint and bleach, does not mean that true society sanctions it. Moreover, since when has the code of society replaced the code of Christianity?

Women may say that they paint in order to be pleasing to men. A poor compliment to men. Moreover the way some women paint is a sin against art. It is as if a house-painter attempted a portrait. But, it may be said, should not a woman aim at being beautiful for the sake of the aesthetic demands of social affairs? A woman may use every legitimate means of dress and ornamentation to set off her beauty, but she should not parade under false colours. The lily may be placed in an artistic setting, but a painted lily!

Painting is vulgar at its best. It is an admission of fading charms even when it is done artistically, and when not so done it is disgusting. I know that many girls do not look upon it in this way. Their opinions are taken from the crowd.

In the long run painting defeats the very purpose it has in view. Painted beauties become old before their time. We cannot trifle with nature with impunity. And oh, the tragedy of a girl caught off guard, without the chance of getting at her paint pot!

Besides, some girls owe their ruin to paint. Men are apt to be bold with painted beauties. A painted girl is more or less an invitation to license, to men who meet her casually. I heard a woman complain to a policeman that a man was staring her out of countenance. He looked at her for a moment, and said: "Madam, you invite it." And she did, by her painted face and her abbreviated dress.

In dealing with this matter so far, I have spoken on grounds of good taste and welfare. A word now to young women as Catholics.

Of all women whose appearance should conform to the most proper standards. Catholics should be conspicuous. Let those who have no religion, or very little, use the arts that deceive and mislead, and very often tempt to sin. But a Catholic woman should keep aloof from any such artifices.

Sometimes you will hear Catholic girls or mothers say that they have got to dress in the fashion and follow the lead of society people or give up social aspirations. Let me narrate an experience of my own.

I was asked to go on a sick call to a fashionable hotel some fifteen miles from a railway station. When I had administered the last Sacraments, and performed my duties, it was early evening, and my host, the father of the sick man, informed me that the next train would not start for five hours.

Accordingly, I dined with him at the hotel. He was a Catholic gentleman, with whom I had frequently discussed vital matters of religion. That very day on our way from the station, we had talked of the free ways into which some of our Catholic women were drifting. He agreed with me that the tendency was a decided shame.

At dinner with him, I was shocked more than once by the style of dress and the painted faces of women who entered the dining-room. I mentioned my observations to my host and said, "Isn't it too bad that you people in society set such an example of impropriety?"

To my astonishment, he replied: "Father, believe me, not one of these women painted and dressed so unbecomingly, belong to society. We have an outside element here tonight, from a neighbouring town, because we have an open dance." He proceeded to inform me that the guests of the hotel were nearly all people in society — strictly so-called. By observing from whom the waiters collected the bill for dinner, one could tell who were the guests, and who were the visitors from the neighbouring towns for the dance of the evening. I found that in every case but two, the painted and objectionably dressed women were at tables where the bill was paid.

"You see, Father, that the society people here are not the offenders. Real society people, for the sake of good form, are just as careful of propriety as the strictest Catholics. By that I do not mean that society has not its sins, as has the rest of the world, but anything that is against what we call good form is more shocking to us than to anyone else."

I suggested that perhaps the standard of good form was at fault. To this he remarked that there were fools in society as elsewhere, and that unfortunately they and their doings sometime gave a wrong notion of society to those not of it.

If a society lady paints or dresses lasciviously, society itself very often gets the censure which belongs to an individual, and for something which society condemns as much as anybody else.

I told my host that I was extremely interested in his observations, because I knew so many Catholics who were society people and who were also among the best Catholics of my acquaintance.

He answered sadly, "Yes, Father, but let me say also, that some of the worst offenders in the matters we speak of are certain Catholics who think that they are conforming to society by aping its most discreditable representatives."

I quite understood, and said that I too had observed how social climbers copy the vices rather than the virtues of the set which they were trying to enter. My host replied by calling my attention to two guests who were among the offenders. "They are, I am sorry to say, breaking into society; they are Catholics and I am not alone in being ashamed of them."

People who ape others are apt to go to extremes. Afterwards, I saw other things which went to prove that the best way to get on socially is to be true to good form, and that the best of good form is the Catholic standard. I could go into detail in regard to this statement, but I prefer not to. Suffice it to say, that the best thing in life is to be always at your best, but your genuine best.

A wise merchant displays his goods to advantage, but he does not sell cotton for wool. A woman who paints is passing herself off for what she is not. If we get counterfeit money, we are angry on discovering the fraud. If a man gets a counterfeit beauty will he not be angered and disgusted when he realizes the deception?

The girl who paints to win her future husband cannot keep herself painted always. If a woman wants to win a man for a few hours only, paint may be of service to her. But for an honest and honourable woman to paint is, apart from religion, bad policy.

Either a woman is badly in need of painting or she is not. If she does not need it, let her avoid it. And young people generally do not need artificial colour. If women need to paint, it is a sign that their health is bad or that accumulating years are treating them harshly. In either case, the best paint is exercise and moderation.

For paint really deceives no one. Age can be judged by other things than looks, and a woman who looks younger than she is, invites close inspection. Thus the signs of age are discerned beneath their covering of cosmetics. Paint always makes men suspect the worst and leads them to consider the woman much older or more Invalided or homelier than she really is.

Catholics, thank God, have for the most part set a splendid example of propriety. So much so is this the case, that people now expect only the best from Catholics. In fact, they are shocked if they see Catholics conforming to some of the vulgar ways which are prevalent. That In Itself is a great compliment.

Catholic women should remember that they represent their Religion. People will form their estimate of the Catholic Church not by its teaching, which they do not know, but from Catholics whom they know and see. Deep down in their hearts, people will respect and envy those who take a stand which they themselves admire but are often too weak to uphold.

Besides, and above all, proper Catholic women know that they are doing what God wants. With them His approval is everything. For in the end it is His approval alone which will matter.

XI. YOUNG MEN AND COURTSHIP

One of the most important periods of a man's life is that which precedes marriage. Marriage is a contract which almost every man makes sooner or later. It is the biggest contract of life. It binds to more than any other contract we can sign. Christian marriage is a bond which only the Creator can undo. A good marriage is the greatest blessing a man can enjoy. A bad marriage is the most dreadful calamity, humanly speaking, that can befall a man.

Business men, before they sign a contract of Importance, reflect a good deal on the Issue. Yet a business contract may turn out badly without destroying a man's happiness. He may try again. He can start anew even if the contract has ruined him. But marriage is for better or worse until God parts man and wife by death.

Therefore the young man who is keeping company is at the most consequential period of his life. The result of his courtship may make him a happy husband and father, or a miserable and disheartened partner for life. The girl has it in her power to make him happy or wretched for life.

There is no middle road in matrimony. A wife is to her husband either a solace or a sorrow. His children will be, to a great extent, what his wife makes them. A good marriage means more to a man than a fortune. A bad marriage is little short of a catastrophe. On no one thing of life does so much depend as on marriage.

This means that a young man's most important decision is made when he says, "This is the girl I am going to marry." For she is going to make his marriage a boon or a bane. All depends on whether or not she is the right girl for him. A girl who would make one man's life agreeable might make another's wretched. The thing each man must be sure of, as far as possible, is whether he has chosen exactly the girl for his happiness.

Marriage is a lottery, it is said. That is because so many young men make it a lottery. They marry a pretty face rather than a girl of suitable disposition. A pretty face is all very well, but frequently it is misleading. There are certain persons who are satisfied with what is superficial. Some people buy a book for its cover. A pretty face is not to be scorned but it is not enough.

Is the girl with the pretty face also a girl with sensible ways? Is she the right girl for you? If not, she will be your undoing. Is her character suitable to yours? And how are you going to know? Ah, there's the rub! If a man could only know!

However, just because it is so uncertain, a man should take all the measures possible to know what he is doing. That is the object of courtship. But if he turn courtship into "spooning" everything conspires to make him marry the wrong girl. If he employs the opportunities of courtship as an occasion of dissipation, of course he will regret it later.

Many of the unhappy marriages nowadays, and there are not a few, are made so because the young man is out for a good time during courtship rather than to consult his future welfare. A good time, certainly, is not taboo — courtship is an oasis, one of the few in the desert of life. But why forget the journey ahead, in the short rest and refreshment possible on that tiny spot? A man and a maid can have a very good time during courtship without losing sight of its main object, and without doing anything that will make them repent afterwards.

For a Christian man will regret it if, in any way, he treats the girl who is to be his wife and the mother of his children with less respect and propriety than he would manifest toward sister or mother. The girl who is the right girl for a young man will inspire him with reverence for her. Unless she makes him feel that he is in the presence of something almost sacred when in her company, he does not truly love her, no matter what attraction she may have for him.

Certain qualities in women attract every man. But love is more than attraction, — it is reverence as well. It is something which makes a man feel that the girl he is courting is a God-given treasure that will ennoble and enrich his life. The girl a man marries should be an inspiration to him for higher and for better things. Courtship, if conducted in the Catholic way, which is God's way, will show a man, ordinarily, whether or not the girl he hopes to marry is suitable for him.

What a dreadful mistake, therefore, some young men make when they rush into marriage because they are taken by a soft voice or a winsome face! What a misuse of courtship those make who measure its success by the extent of the liberties they can win from a maid! Mark it well, young men, the girl who is free and easy with you during courtship, may not be more honourable as a wife than she was as a maiden. The maiden without modesty may be the wife without love.

Love is so sacred, so sublime, that it is cultivated only in modest courtship. Its fruition is in marriage only. Any word or gesture that a man would resent if used toward his mother or sister should be banished from courtship. Your fiancée is not your wife. The purpose of courtship is not the enjoyment of any, even the slightest, tokens of wifely affection, but to discover whether the girl of your choice is suited to be your life's companion.

For she will be your closest companion all the days of your life, closer to you than father or mother, without displacing father or mother in your affection. She is destined to be your helpmeet. Your sorrows, and you will have them, will be hers, your joys also. If she is the right girl for you, she will enable you to face any difficulty and to bear

any reverse. She will be your inspiration. It will be a pleasure for you to work for her and your home. No matter how good or great a man may be, he is better and greater if the girl he marries is the right girl for him. On the other hand, if she is not, she becomes a dead weight on her husband's aspirations and achievements.

Am I not right, then, young men, in saying that the time before marriage is the most important period of life?

In important matters, wise people consult wiser heads. No matter how well educated you may be, even if you have had advantages greater than your parents, it will do you no harm to consult with them about your marriage. I realize that young men at present consider themselves well able to take care of themselves. But it is only necessary to look about you to find that in many cases they have made sad work of their boasted self-sufficiency.

A young man owes it as a matter of obedience and love, to consult with his parents on such an important step as marriage. If his own boy later on should fail to show him the respect of advising with him on such an important matter, he would feel it keenly. The man who expects God's blessing on his married life, must do his part to deserve it, and He commands us all to honour father and mother. Some young men forget that there is such a commandment. They only recall it when they have children of their own.

Love can be a mild form of insanity. Oftentimes I have heard men say that they must have been crazy to marry such a girl. Perhaps they were. When young people are enamoured of each other, they are in a trance, delightful, maybe, but there must be an awakening. And the! They say love is blind. At least, it is not always clear-sighted. That is why consultation and advice will do the young lover no harm.

I know that some who read this, will be ready to grant that it is true generally, but they will say that it does not apply to them. That is why I wish to convince you that it does apply to you, to you more than to anyone else. The blindest in love are those who think they see best.

I knew a man of great business acumen, whose common sense was remarkable. He had often given sound advice to others and was held in esteem for his good counsel. He frequently boasted that he would never be fooled by a girl, that when he married he would know what he was doing. Hearing him speak in this strain, I cautioned him: "You are the very kind of man that gets a bad bargain, when your business is with a woman's heart." But he was sure of his own prudence. Well, he got married, and his wife turned out to be a vixen. She led him a furious dance, and before long, the poor man seemed to have lost all Interest in life. Three years after his marriage, he said to me: "Father, no man is so big a fool as the wise fool!"

I do not mean to be hard on the girls. A girl is just as apt to be deceived as the man. In my talk to young women, I shall tell them how much depends on their accepting the right kind of man. Both man and woman are entering upon a very serious and uncertain venture. Again I say, "Go slow; seek counsel; consider not only a girl's face, but her disposition." Nothing that attracts the love of a man, loses its hold so quickly as a pretty face. The strong bond of love is disposition. That does not wear out. Looks, especially the artificial looks of the modern girl, fade, but a good disposition lasts and improves with association.

In every walk of life there are men who know everything, apparently. Usually they come to grief. Successful men are successful because they have profited by the wisdom and experience of others. Having shared for years the confidences of men and women seeking help in marriage problems, and having employed sincere effort in helping those unfortunate in marriage, I may truly say that courtship is the period in a man's life when he can least afford to be unmindful of the future.

We hear a good deal nowadays about incompatibility. A young man and woman stand before the priest to be married; he thinks that she is the most wonderful woman in the world, and she considers him the finest man that ever lived. If the priest should say to either that something might one day estrange them, they would not believe it possible.

And yet how often these two, after a few years, sometimes after a few months, barely tolerate each other! It hardly seems possible. During courtship they seemed angels to each other. After marriage association, they appear as ordinary mortals. During courtship each saw the other under only the most favourable conditions. Instead of employing that period to get acquainted, it was used for amusement, regardless of what the outcome might be.

If a man uses all his power and resources to please a girl, of course she seems angelic. Later on when he pays her just ordinary attention her true disposition appears. In courtship, therefore, try to be what you expect to be all your life. In a word, be just yourself. Then she will be herself, and there will be less likelihood of mutual disappointment.

In this advice to a young man about choosing wisely, I do not imply that the girl is, not lovable and desirable. A girl who would make an ideal wife for one man might make marriage a veritable plague for another. Unless there is mutual adaptability a young man may as well say farewell to happiness if he marries.

In speaking thus to a young man, I am not taking it for granted that he is perfect. What I say to him I say to both: that they should make sure that they are suited to be life-long companions, in the most intimate companionship known to mankind.

Since religion plays such an important part in the life of a good girl, it is ordinarily a mistake for a Catholic to marry a non-Catholic. With good people religion is a serious matter. A good girl who is a non-Catholic will thus be at variance with her husband in a matter which plays a big part in life.

If it should happen that the wife's religion is not a serious matter, another great difficulty arises. Children will be under the influence of a mother to whom religion means little or nothing. In spite of all their father may do, the chances are that they will grow up indifferent Catholics, or lose the Faith entirely.

The religion of a non-Catholic wife either means a good deal to her, or it does not. If it does, there is created by that very fact a serious difference between husband and wife. If it does not, the Catholic husband is consigning his children to irreligious influence. Children will not make religion a serious matter ordinarily if their mother does not. A mixed marriage is a great responsibility for any young man.

As a matter of fact, difference of religion does ordinarily cause more or less estrangement between man and wife. Introducing an element of discord. It does not show itself in courtship, when both are so wonderfully absorbed in each other that other things are in the background. But when everyday life begins, differences in religion assert themselves.

A young man should not wait until he is deeply in love with a girl before knowing what her religion is. It may be too late then. Before he begins to court her, he should find out her faith. Even with similarity of religious belief, there are apt to be many differences between man and wife. If difference of faith is added, other differences will be multiplied in number and intensity.

If you are willing to take the advice of one who knows intimately the conditions which ordinarily prevail in mixed marriages, you will hesitate seriously before marrying a non-Catholic. Even with the help of religion, marriage will have its hardships and misunderstandings. A young man needs only to look at his own family to verify this. He knows what has happened in its circle. Of course he fancies that his own married life will be different. His father and mother had the same conviction; otherwise they would not have married. But all of us must expect our share of tribulation in life, as a reminder that our heaven is not here.

However, do not mistake me. I do not wish to discourage marriage, but rather, to help introduce into it the maximum of happiness. If marriage has its uncertainties and sorrows, so has single life. A good marriage is the greatest good fortune a man can experience in life. A young man should pray frequently during courtship for God's guidance. He prays for success in other things. Nothing compares in importance with marriage. His happiness here, and perhaps hereafter, is intimately associated with it.

In conclusion, therefore, let me sum up. Courtship is to be regarded not as a diversion, but as the most serious period of life. During courtship, a man should reverence the girl he hopes to make his wife. A good woman values modesty above everything else, and a good young man will not want a wife who does not put virtue above everything.

Courtship does not entitle a man to any more liberties with a girl than are customary in the family circle. Lust is not love. Sexual familiarity of any kind is just as much a sin in courtship as it is out of it.

Even betrothal does not entitle a man to liberties. God has implanted certain sexual instincts in man and woman for the purpose of drawing them together in marriage, but before marriage any deliberate indulgence of a passionate character is a sin. This applies to the woman as well as to the man.

A loose code of morals prevails among many people who are irreligious and worldly, and the consequences are most dreadful. But I am addressing Catholics, who realize that passion must be controlled by the law of God. If a

man's feeling for the girl he intends to marry is of such nature and strength that he cannot restrain it within proper bounds, it is to be feared that he is swayed by lust rather than by love.

I am speaking plainly because with some people courtship has degenerated into license. And courtship so carried on, breeds nothing but misery, besides being sinful. Marriages which result from that sort of courtship will not be happy, ordinarily. They do not merit God's blessing on them.

Again I say that modesty is the guardian of purity, and purity is the basis of Christian marriage. Everything is undue in courtship that is undue out of it. A sweetheart who invites familiarities, is not the girl for a good young man. Moreover, the sweetheart who is subjected to undue familiarities will suffer inexpressible anguish if she is virtuous. True love will never humiliate or embarrass. Because a girl is weak or over-anxious to please a man, he should not take advantage of it. Let him conduct himself as a man of Christian honour. In that way, true love will increase between him and his betrothed, the only love which will ennoble both and make them worthy of each other.

When a young man goes a-courting, therefore, he should realize that the girl whom he addresses will be his companion of soul as well as of body and mind, for life if he marries her. He should employ this momentous time to find out if their dispositions will make for agreeable association through all the years during which they may be man and wife. And, above all, he should be mindful of Catholic modesty, the guardian of purity and the guarantee of true love. A courtship conducted thus may reasonably be expected to confer on man and woman that greatest of life's blessings, a happy marriage.

XII. YOUNG WOMEN AND COURTSHIP

Marriage means a good deal to a man, but more to a woman. When a marriage turns out badly, the man has any number of diversions and business interests to occupy his time and thought. The woman, whose duty is mainly in the domestic circle, has little opportunity of distraction, as our ethical code permits her almost no social life independent of her husband. It is safe to say that for determining her natural happiness, and comfort, marriage is the most important step in a woman's life. The most important person in her world is the man she marries, he is part of her life — and a very considerable part.

Suppose you could choose your own father or mother! How careful you would be to select the best possible. A husband is more in a girl's life than father or mother have been. Yet some girls accept a man's attentions without knowing anything more about him than he shows when on exhibition.

Every man courting a girl is on exhibition. He is at his best. If she accepts him at face value, basing her estimate on appearances only, she will believe that he is one of the finest men that ever lived. It is easy for a man to be nice to a girl when he is attracted by her. He can hardly help it.

Some men are angels in love and brutes in marriage. After the spell of love-making is over, the man returns to normal. It is his normal self that will eventually be in the home. Common sense therefore tells the girl to try to know what kind of normal man he is who courts her. For the sake of a little vanity or brief enjoyment, she should not give herself to a man whom she does not know thoroughly.

Why are there so many unsatisfactory marriages nowadays? The man does not know the girl and the girl does not know the man. They think they do. But it is harder to know a man or woman than to know anything else. Yet young people often fancy that they know each other after a very short association.

They forget that there is more camouflage in courtship than in anything else, except war. Indeed, we may leave out war, and put marriage first. A man presents his best, and only his best, to the girl he courts. Of course that is right, — for him. But the girl should realize that he will not always be at his best, and that she must discount a good deal if she wants to know what he is normally.

How often have I heard married women say: "Oh, if I had only known him, I never would have married him!" Perhaps he says the same of her. At all events, it brings home the point I wish to make. A young woman should study the man who offers her attentions, more carefully than any other matter in life.

And yet, see how many fine girls rush to the first plausible man who holds out a hand to them! It happens, too, that a girl, after she has found that the man is undesirable, will sometimes continue to accept his attentions. She fears talk.

What will people say? Her vanity or pride or weakness makes her give her hand, if not her heart, in marriage. And then she wonders that her married life is a nightmare.

The beginning of courtship should be so slow and reserved that the girl may withdraw at any time without attracting comment. Before accepting constant attention from a man she should observe him seriously and thus be in a position to prevent the full development of a courtship which cannot ripen into a happy marriage. A girl should not accept the marked admiration and favours of a man until she knows him well enough and favourably enough to accept his proposal.

In Catholic countries where a marriage is always a careful procedure, unhappy unions are the exception. Here nobody knows anybody any too well, and there is so much mingling of the sexes, and so little of home life and neighbourly acquaintance, that the whole problem is different and difficult. A girl frequently permits a chance meeting to develop into courtship. What is the result? Too often a broken life.

A man should not be taken at his face value. Let him visit the girl in her home, and let her see him at his home, before she allows him to go out with her regularly. And when she finds him repeating his attentions, let her ask the opinion of her parents about him, and better still, find out, if she can, the real opinion of his own parents about him.

I know that some girls consider themselves the sole and capable judges in such matters. Very well. They will not be the first to find out, too late, that two heads are better than one. If the young fellow is suitable, a girl's father and mother will be more glad to say so than she will be to hear it. That is certain. And if he is not suitable, it will be as hard for them to say it, as for her to hear it. It can be taken for granted that a girl's parents love her and want her to be happy. But they love her sensibly. A girl in love loves foolishly, too often. She closes her eyes to the future to indulge a pleasant prospect for the moment. There are few regrettable marriages where girls are guided by their parents.

The first direction I give, therefore, to a girl contemplating marriage is to go slowly and carefully. If a man really loves her, he will love her all the more for her reserve. This leads me to the second point. It may sound contradictory, but it is nevertheless a fact that men, or at least many men, will take all the liberties a girl will allow and yet the more she allows the less they will think, of her. Is that not strange? A man never loves a girl so much as when she keeps him at a proper distance and makes him respect and reverence her.

Moreover, the willingness to take liberties with a girl, and true love for her rarely go together. The man may think he loves her, but it is his animal nature that asserts itself. A man who, out of regard for the woman who is to be his wife, does not master his passions and respect her modesty, will not respect her as his wife and the mother of his children. It is common to hear men say that they would never marry a girl who would allow familiarities.

A man can recognize a girl's love for him without her relinquishing anything of maidenly propriety. On his very first attempt at being unmindful of her womanly dignity, she should put her foot down hard. If she does not, he may take it as an indication that she wants him to go further. Then the barrier of decency and reserve is down, calamity follows, and eventually sin, which is worst of all. A man loves a woman in proportion as she shows maidenly reserve. If he does not respect her modesty, she may know that he will not make her a true husband.

Now I come to the third point, which will make many scowl, I fear. And yet more depends on it, almost, than on any other one thing. In courtship, of course, the girl will appear at her best. But she should not pretend to be what she is not. Deception during courtship is accountable for more unhappy marriages than anyone could believe.

Some girls do not care for consequences. They are satisfied to make an impression, regardless of whether or not it is genuine. What is the result? A dreadful disillusionment comes at a time when it is too late to offset it. Love turns into indifference or disgust and the married life becomes a prolonged misfortune. It is very well for a girl to be at her best, but let it be her true best — with a resolution to maintain it all her life. I have heard girls say that they would use any means to win a man. Such girls usually come to grief — and they deserve it.

Another point I wish to insist on is that a girl should regard not so much a man's looks as his character. If his disposition does not fit in with hers, if there is not a sympathy of feeling between them, if their natures are not congenial, it is a sign that they are not intended for each other. Better no marriage than an uncongenial marriage. The trials of married life are many under the best circumstances, but under bad conditions, they are innumerable and unbearable.

I now come to my last observation. Even with the blessing of religion on married life, we find a good deal to make us realize that our heaven is not here below. But without religion, we are deprived of the very best means given by God, for marriage welfare.

True, some mixed marriages turn out well. But even these would be doubly blessed if both persons were Catholics. Many mixed marriages are tragedies. Nothing is so near to the heart of a true Catholic girl as her religion. Some men will respect the Faith and practice of a Catholic wife, but many more notwithstanding their pre-marriage promises, will not. Every priest has a sad record of broken families due to a difference of religion between man and wife.

When a man is in love he is under a spell. It is easy for him to rise to wonderful heights of magnanimity. But that spell does not last. The points of difference about religion which seemed little or nothing previously, may rise up and form a wall of ice between husband and wife. What is deepest in her life, she finds, has no meaning for him.

But that is not all. When the children see the father practise one religion or none at all, and the mother another, they conclude in many cases that religion does not matter much. The number of children of mixed marriages who have lost the Faith is legion¹.

A Catholic young woman should hesitate to assume the responsibility of such an outcome. Before a girl permits courtship to begin, she should ascertain whether the man is a Catholic and a good Catholic. The single state in life is a thousand times preferable, in most cases, to a mixed marriage. When husband and wife are of the same faith, there is a bond uniting their very souls. In joy they will rejoice more abundantly, and in sorrow they will have an unflinching support.

To sum up, therefore, let me say again that choosing a husband is, humanly speaking, the most consequential thing in a girl's life. In regard to it there should be exercised more deliberation than on anything else.

In courtship, maidenly reserve should never be compromised. Modesty should be held sacred. It is the guardian of purity. It is a maiden's most beautiful adornment. Even the men who will do their utmost to rob a maiden of that adornment, will despise her when they have succeeded.

A Catholic girl should not be guided by the loose moral code of those who have no religion. Courtship has degenerated among certain classes into downright sin. Some young folks think that courtship entitles them to free love. The law of God holds for young people during courtship just as strictly as it does for everyone else.

The young lady who joins maidenly reserve to her other attractions inspires love far more than does a girl who makes concessions to her lover. And when I speak of concessions, I mean anything and everything which a girl would hesitate to do in the presence of her sister or mother. Courtship is a preparation for marriage. If she expects God's blessing on her married life, she must respect His law during courtship. Again I say it is only right and proper that a girl should be at her best during courtship — but let me remind her that it should be her genuine best.

Moreover, as marriage is so important an event, everything should be done to have it as God wishes it to be. Without every possible safeguard, marriage with a non-Catholic is a losing venture, and even with every precaution, it risks true welfare. A girl should prepare for marriage by being true to her religion. Marriage deserves every effort to draw God's special blessings on it by prayer and frequent Holy Communion.

¹ When one of the parents is a Catholic and the other a Protestant, only 34 out of 100 of the young men, when they grow up, cling to some faith.

When both parents are of the same Protestant denomination, 68 out of 100 of the young men profess some belief.

When both parents are Catholics, 92 out of 100 of the young men go to church.

In other words, from the Catholic families of the country only 8 out of 100 are lost to the Church. From the Protestant families where the parents are of the same religion, 32 out of 100 are lost to Christianity. While in the families of mixed Catholic and Protestant marriages 66 out of 100 give up the profession of any religion.

Two-thirds, then, of the sons of mixed marriages go to swell the great army of the indifferentists who are drifting back to paganism. (Quoted from "The Holy Name Journal.")

If my advice and counsels have helped one young woman to recognize and accept the right man, a man of her own religion, who will find in her a God-given wife, I shall be recompensed for my efforts. My words may perhaps, in some respects, seem to restrict inclinations, but I can affirm from long experience that they point the way to permanent peace and welfare.

In conclusion I say, seek first the kingdom of God and His justice. God's way is always the best way, here and hereafter. The longest life comes to an end, May the marriage of the Catholic girl be the means of making that end the beginning of everlasting life and blessedness for herself and the man to whom she gave her heart in wedlock.

XIII. AMUSEMENTS

One of the chief problems confronting young people at the present time is that of amusement. Parents also are frequently as puzzled as their children in this matter.

Young people must have amusement. If they do not have the right kind, they will have the harmful kind. It is all very well for parents and elders to say "don't do this" and "don't do that." Such advice or direction is waste of breath unless what they may do instead is also pointed out. It is not enough to forbid harmful entertainment; what is safe and profitable must be provided.

Parents and pastors often thunder against unwholesome movies and dangerous dances. But young folks will dance and young folks will go to the movies. The thing to do is to give the young folks dances of the right sort, under the right auspices. Even now the world of entertainment, in moving pictures or other forms, has its good things. It is for us to be on the lookout for them, and to recommend them to others.

To forbid and forbid and again to forbid, without pointing out an alternative, is worse than useless. This is beginning to be realized nowadays. Pastors and parents everywhere are striving to furnish safe entertainment for the young. But there are some who have not yet awakened to the necessity of providing, but continue the old plan of forbidding. Such good people are astonished at the futility of their efforts

I knew a pastor who entered into the social life of his people, encouraging good plays, frequent dances and "sociables," and urging parents to attend these affairs, with the result that the young people of his congregation had so much wholesome amusement that they never thought of indulging in anything questionable. These entertainments brought the people together, helped to make them acquainted, enabled many fine young men to meet attractive young women of their own Faith, and the result was an increased number of good Catholic marriages.

How often do we hear a Catholic girl say that she has no opportunities of meeting Catholic young men! And time and again, when I have spoken to young men about marrying Catholic girls, their reply was that nothing would please them more, but that they do not have the good fortune of meeting them socially.

Many of our finest Catholic girls accept the eager attentions of men, not of the Faith, who recognize their sterling worth. Meanwhile, our Catholic young men marry girls not of the Faith, while all around them are Catholic girls who would make them splendid wives.

Let us be candid. Other churches can teach us a lesson in the value of social functions. With them, perhaps, such things are overdone, because they have little else. But one good effect which we might profitably strive for, is just this encouraging of friendship which tends to hold a community together. In our large cities especially is this necessary. It is almost impossible for young Catholic men and women to get acquainted in our city parishes. They attend Mass on Sundays and return home, and the people they meet are as so many trees in a forest.

Time and again I have had a young man say to me: "Father, I wish I could meet some nice girls of our Faith. I want to marry and I don't want to have a mixed marriage, but how am I to get introduced to our Catholic girls? We do not have any social affairs, or anything of that kind to bring the young fellows and girls together."

And I have had our girls say to me something like this: "You blame me, Father, for keeping company with a non-Catholic. But what am I to do? I never meet our Catholic young men, we have nothing to bring us together."

It is all so true. In Catholic countries there are a thousand and one occasions for social acquaintance. But here, in this land of all religions and none, there are few or no occasions when Catholic meets Catholic socially. What is the result? Many mixed marriages and broken lives.

Parents should not leave this matter to the initiative of the pastor. They should get together in groups, of their own accord, and encourage home dances, good entertainments and plays, and sociability generally. I have known districts where religious blue laws reigned, and where, in consequence, the young people went to the devil.

Some people think that piety is gloom, and that religion must be stiff-necked. Our divine Lord did not think so. He worked His first miracle at a social gathering, and for the purpose of adding to its cheer. Piety means cheerfulness in doing good. Religion is intended to make us serve God cheerfully. Young people can be saints at a dance as well as at their devotions.

Proper dances and proper amusements call for Christian restraint and virtue. They may become the means, under right circumstances, of furthering God's designs in us. The thing to do is, not to discourage or condemn amusements, but to surround them with Christian safeguards and make them as attractive as possible.

The place to begin amusements is in the home. Some parents create such an air of restraint about the home that the children, old and young, cannot get out fast enough. On the contrary, the home should be so attractive, that only occasionally should the children care to seek their pleasure elsewhere. Music, books, games, conversation, should be cultivated in the family circle. Parents should strive to make the children feel decidedly "at home."

Some parents think that their chief duty in life is to recite a litany of "don'ts." They are surprised that the children fall to appreciate this form of parental devotion. It is the doing that counts, not the "don'ts." If the parents provide good home attractions, recourse to the "don'ts" will become unnecessary. In addition to home attractions, the parents should not neglect the social entertainment of their children. Visits to friends whose Influence and homes meet with the approval of parents should be encouraged, and when friends visit our children we should make things as pleasant as possible for them.

Some parents embarrass their children by their treatment of young visitors. Very well. Let them go on doing that, but they should not be surprised if their children draw away from them and from the home influence. A mother especially should do all in her power to help the young people entertain their guests. Let children be strictly obliged to consult their mother before inviting visitors, but to treat even a child guest inconsiderately in the home does harm to one's own child as well as to the others.

Of course there is a measure in everything. There may be excess and abuse in this matter of entertainment, as in everything else. But we should not set ourselves against amusement because of these abuses. Parents can best take a stand against the excesses not by drastic prohibitory measures, but by a heart to heart talk with their children. In this way they will give themselves the comfort of knowing that they have fulfilled their duty, and done their best in a very important matter.

Children sometimes break loose and run wild in spite of efforts of their parents, but they are much more likely to return to the right path, sadder but wiser, if their minds recall pleasant home memories. No care or supervision is ever entirely lost. The best efforts at times may seem to be wasted, but it is only apparently so.

In a thousand ways, and most unexpectedly, the pains taken with children will bear fruit. If parents do not meet with present success in their efforts for those dear to them, they should not be discouraged. If they do their part faithfully, they will have no cause to regret it.

With young children, boys and girls, healthy outdoor sports should be encouraged. Nothing can replace God's playground, the open. Why be afraid of a few bruises or scratches or soiled clothes? Some parents get into hysterics if a child comes home crying, and forbid the little one to play thereafter with those bad companions! Nothing could be worse. Parents should teach their boys and girls to give and take. Their health and development are worth all the bruises and tears of their growing years.

As children grow older, parents should keep an eye on where they go. They may thus prevent harm by anticipating it. When parents forbid son or daughter to do this or that, to go here or there, they should be sure beforehand that the prohibition is advisable and practicable. Then they should insist absolutely on its fulfilment.

Growing boys and girls learn very quickly whether orders mean anything or not. Many parents are themselves to blame for their wayward children. They command and threaten and fume, but never really insist on anything. Commanding and threatening talk is of little or no use with a boy or girl, a young man or woman. Action is the

language they understand and respect. If a father tells them to keep away from such and such a place, if a mother commands them to avoid such and such company, and they do not obey, the parents must kindly but firmly let them see from experience that it does not pay to disregard parental instructions. What that action should be will depend on the character of the parents, as well as on that of the children.

As children approach maturity, they should be allowed more and more latitude. If they have been brought up properly, there will be little reason to fear that they will abuse their enlarged freedom, which should not be curtailed, unless their amusements are harmful, or interfere with their duties and prospects.

There is, for example, in some quarters, a puritanical notion that card playing is sinful. Card playing at home for amusement and competition in skill is a perfectly proper social entertainment, even on Sunday. It may be necessary to distinguish between card playing and gambling. Gambling is playing for stakes with the risk of losing what may be required for the maintenance of oneself and family. If a man runs the risk of causing his wife or children to suffer for what he may lose at cards, card playing for him is wrong.

To play for small sums, in order to add interest to the game, is not wrong. One may legitimately spend some of one's money on amusement. The danger always lies in going to excess. But if we condemned things because of their possible abuse, we should have to stop almost everything in the world. Moderation is necessary in everything. A Catholic young man or woman should certainly be able to exercise moderation. Please do not understand me as advocating a form of amusement that is not "in keeping with good morals. Card playing among friends for little or no stakes, can be an innocent home amusement.

Home dances, or dances in private halls, under good supervision, are greatly to be encouraged. Such parties can be very beneficial socially, for young people. If they have something of the kind to look forward to, they will have less temptation to go to questionable places where so many meet their ruin.

We must take human nature as it is, and conditions as we find them, and then do our best under the circumstances. Dancing is widely popular among the young. Dancing of the right sort is innocent and beneficial. Instead of condemning it fruitlessly, let us safeguard it and make it the means of serving a good social purpose among our people. There are bad dances, and bad effects from good dances. That does not condemn dancing any more than unfortunate marriages condemn matrimony. There are good dances with good results. We should encourage these.

Parents should endeavour to identify themselves with their children's amusements. By interesting themselves in what the young people like, they can add to their pleasure and safeguard it. In these days, the more that parents share the amusements of their children, the better. It is thus that mother and father keep in touch and know just what is best to say and do on occasion.

Particular care should be exercised in regard to the theatre and the movies. One bad play may set a young person on the road to ruin. The theatrical business has many men of fine ideals and high principles in it, who seek to make the drama uplifting.

But unfortunately, some theatre managers have appeared of late who seek patronage by pandering to the passions and weaknesses of humanity. I know of some actors under such managers who have renounced large salaries, because they feel degraded in filling the roles assigned them. The number of vile stage folk is, however, great enough to supply this polluted kind of performance. It is not only soul-killing, but happiness killing as well. The misfortune of it is that it parades under the name of art. It should be avoided as the plague.

In general, it is very hard to be specific in regard to amusements. But on one thing we can be specific. If we find that any game or diversion or entertainment is the cause or occasion of sin for us, we should drop it. If, after any amusement, we feel less like looking into the face of God, or our own mother, we should keep away from it thereafter.

The principal purpose of amusement is to give rest and recreation to fit us for the burdens of life. If we find that a certain recreation interferes with our duties, our responsibilities, our self-respect, we should let it alone.

Like everything else, amusement is a creature of God. It is intended to further our welfare here and our eternal welfare hereafter. And, like everything that God has given us, no matter how good, it may be misused. It is our part to enjoy the good things that God gives us in a way that will show our gratitude and draw us closer to him.

Not prayer only, but amusement in due season and of the right sort may help us to save our souls. Indeed, it is a form of prayer when we take it properly and with the right motives. By having reverence for God and His holy law in all that we do, we may turn to account every action of the day. Whether we eat or drink, play or pray, if we do it as we should it becomes a means of our serving God and saving our souls.

St. Aloysius was engaged at a game of checkers on a certain occasion, when he was asked by one of his companions what he would do if he knew he was to die in five minutes. "I would keep right on playing," he answered. That was because he did everything in the right way, — the way that makes everything a prayer.

XIV. YOUNG MEN AND THE HIGHER LIFE

Some men have a strong inclination to do noble things. They are not satisfied with being ordinary. They are not content with limiting themselves to what they are obliged to do.

We see this frequently in the father of a family who makes unusual sacrifices for the welfare and happiness of his wife and children. Such a man often denies himself things which he likes and is entitled to, but which he is glad to do without, for the benefit of those whom he loves. We observe it again in the young man who, out of devotion to father and mother, foregoes many pleasures he might reasonably enjoy. Especially do we notice it in time of war, when men volunteer for disagreeable and dangerous service for love of country.

If a man desires to do something out of the ordinary, something notable, for love of friends, family or country, should he not desire to do something notable for God? Most men can do this in their own families, or among their friends, or in business, by being what God counsels them to be. The father of a family, the husband, the son, the friend can do much for God by being the right kind of father, husband, son, or friend.

For most men, that is all God asks. If they succeed in living their social and business life in a manner pleasing to God, they will be saints in heaven. But although this is enough, and all that is possible for many men, there are others to whom God gives the opportunity of being distinguished in His service. As a government has posts of distinction in its army and its courts, so has God.

In the Great War, our government called for picked men to volunteer for arduous service. Many responded heroically. The Church of God is always at war with the world. It needs volunteers for special service. The great body of Christian men form the army of the Lord. They are doing good work for God and country by keeping the commandments. But the army of the Lord calls also for special workers to be officers and to aid the army in doing its work.

A body of soldiers is of little use unless it has a good officer in command. The man back of a gun cannot do much without ammunition and food. Great importance is attached to the commissariat department in the army. If food and officers fail, the army goes to pieces.

The army of the Lord needs officers, commissioned and non-commissioned. It wants priests and brothers. Are you so situated that you can hearken to the call? And have you the desire to do something special in the service of God Almighty? Do you want to be distinguished in God's service? Let us begin with the priesthood.

The question is put to the youth attending school, and to the man who has finished his education and is unmarried — have you a strong inclination to serve God as a priest? It means a clean heart, a good head and a real desire to show one's love for God by a life of service and sacrifice. The married man, who cannot consider this matter for himself, may have a boy who is good and clean and intelligent, whom he would like to see a priest some day.

The first step is to pray; then comes a talk with the parish priest, or with some priest in whom the young man can confide. God will bless the family that gives Him one of its own flesh and blood for the Sanctuary. But the matter must depend primarily upon the boy himself. A father must not persuade his son to join the priesthood. The call must come from God. But father and mother can help a vocation by their own good life, by the respect they show for the priesthood, and by directing the boy's thoughts to the sublimity of a priestly career. It is often the good example of a father or mother that develops a vocation to the priesthood.

For those who are called to it, the priesthood is the highest honour a human being can receive. A priest is a companion of Christ, as were the Apostles. Christ still lives, and will always live, in His Church. He is doing now for the world by the priesthood precisely what He did for the people of Palestine when He was on earth.

Furthermore, a priest is the personal representative of Jesus Christ among men. When he baptizes, it is in the name of Christ. When he forgives sin in the confessional, it is as the ambassador of Christ. When he celebrates Holy Mass, he does so as Christ. At the consecration the priest does not say: "This is the body of Christ," but he speaks as Christ Himself, and says: "This is My Body." When the priest preaches, he does not preach his own doctrine, but the teachings of Christ.

In all his ministrations, therefore, the priest is another Christ, as it were. What a sublime dignity! What an honour is conferred on a young man who is called to be a priest! It is an honour not only for himself, but for his parents and family and friends.

But if it is an honour, it is also a sacrifice. Christ left His home in heaven and came into this world to suffer and die for us. The priest leaves home and offers his life to suffering and service for the salvation of the souls redeemed by his Master, Jesus Christ. Hence it is only young men of generous heart and noble purpose who respond to the call of Christ to come and follow Him as a priest.

Any young man who desires to distinguish himself by doing something special for God may become a priest if he has the intelligence and virtue required. And what is the degree of intelligence that is requisite? About the same as that necessary for the practice of law or medicine or any of the learned professions.

One must be prepared for a long course of studies. A priest must be so well educated that he can meet men of the learned professions on their own ground and always uphold the Faith. He requires a knowledge of literature, science, history, philosophy and theology. As a rule, the priest is one of the best informed men in the place where he lives.

In addition to knowledge, a priest must also have virtue. Indeed, of the two, virtue is the more necessary. A virtuous priest with moderate learning is preferable to a learned priest with scant virtue. But, thank God, it is characteristic of the priesthood that virtue and learning are combined.

A young man, therefore, who wishes to use this short and uncertain life to do something splendid for God, can carry out his purpose by dedicating himself to the priesthood. In that way, he will not only secure his own salvation, but will help others to attain the blessedness which our Lord came on earth to bestow on mankind.

We shall now consider the vocation of a brother. A brother may be considered a non-commissioned officer in the army of the Lord. An army would be dreadfully handicapped without its non-commissioned officers. And so would the Church be at a dreadful loss without her brotherhoods.

There are some brotherhoods which constitute an order in themselves, like the Christian Brothers, devoting their lives to teaching and to training boys and young men to a career of virtue and usefulness.

There are other brotherhoods which are attached to religious orders of priests to help them in their work. There are Franciscan Brothers, Benedictine Brothers, Dominican Brothers and Jesuit Brothers, not to mention others. These Brothers take the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience just the same as the priests of the order. They share all the privileges of the order, and are as truly religious as the priests themselves.

Many of the great missionaries were accompanied by brothers in their journeys to convert people to the true Faith. The brother thus shares in all the merit of the missionary, and enables him to attend exclusively to priestly duties.

In the monastery or rectory, the brother attends to all the domestic affairs. As women are excluded from the houses of religious orders of men, all the work ordinarily done by women in the home is done by the brothers. But, besides the help they afford the priests, they have also all the means of sanctifying themselves which the priests enjoy — prayer, daily Mass and Communion, meditation, pious reading, frequent instructions, and the good example of the cloister generally.

Any man who is unmarried and who has no one depending on him for support may aspire to be a brother.*² An education is not necessary. If a man has a good education or trade, so much the better. But some of the best brothers

² For fuller information see the recently published book, *Convent Life, the Meaning of a Religious Vocation*, by Martin J. Scott, S. J.,

have little or no education. If a man has a generous heart, a cheerful disposition and willing hands, he may become a brother, provided he feels the call to a higher life and desires to prove his love for God by service and sacrifice. It is not what one does for the Lord that counts, but the good will which one has in doing it.

A brother who attends to the door of a religious house, or who acts as sacristan of the church, may be more pleasing to God than a great preacher who wins the praise of the congregation by a grand discourse. It all depends. If you work for the Lord and not for yourself, the smallest thing becomes big. And if you work for yourself and not for the Lord, the biggest thing may count for nothing.

In the Great War some of our soldiers served in the kitchen, others were engaged in digging, some did domestic duty in the barracks. Many of these men were refined and wealthy. Did they consider that they were lowering themselves in acting as servants? Not at all. They realized that they were doing it, not for the men whom they served, but for their country, and that motive dignified their labour and made it honourable.

A brother does the domestic work of a religious house for the love of God! How wonderfully that elevates the most common action! What difference does it make whether you use a broom or a pen if you are doing it for God, to advance His cause? The priest would have no time for study, preaching, hearing confessions, etc., if he had to attend to his own table and room. The brother who does that for him actually shares in all the good work done by the priest in the pulpit and in the confessional.

Besides, the brother is offering to God the sacrifice of his life, and by this sacrifice he is helping the Church to continue the work of Jesus Christ among mankind. That constitutes him a fellow worker of our Lord. It makes him an officer in the company captained by Jesus Christ.

For the brother is not working for this man or that, but for Jesus Christ. When a soldier obeys an officer, he is not obeying the man, but the government whom the officer represents. And so with the brother. He consecrates himself to God. He lives for God, works for God, suffers for God, and, if need be, dies for God. And God will be his reward. The brother who has dedicated his life to the service of God on earth will reign with God forever in heaven.

The life of a brother is humble, it is hidden from the eyes of man, it has no reward here, except peace and the satisfaction of a life nobly spent. But God will not be outdone in generosity. We can never regret anything we have done for God. And if the eyes of the world do not see the brother, God sees even the littlest things he does for Him, and He who sees in secret will reward openly. After all, is it not enough to have God see us and be pleased with us?

I speak to the man who reads this. Are you free to volunteer for the brotherhood, and do you feel called to the higher life of service and sacrifice? , If so, talk the matter over with your pastor or confessor — a priest who knows you well. The Church needs you. The call for brothers is loud and insistent. The religious orders can double their work if they have good brothers.

But do not consider this vocation unless you are prepared to make big sacrifices. You will have to give up life-long associations, change your manner of living entirely. However, you will do that and other things gladly if you have a real vocation. The sign of it is the desire to lead a higher life and to be of service to your fellow men for the love of God and the salvation of souls. If you feel that vocation, pray, consult your confessor, and go ahead in God's name. What a joy it will be to you for all eternity to realize that you enrolled yourself as a helper under the standard of Jesus Christ!

But do not act inconsiderately. A true vocation does not require haste. The fervour of the moment should not decide a step of such importance. If, however, you experience a steady attraction to the higher and holier service of God, do not harden your heart to it. Cultivate the seeds of vocation, and when you feel convinced that God wants you, be generous enough to respond. And when you have made up your mind, let nothing interfere with God's call. Be prepared for obstacles and difficulties. These will only serve to show your loyalty to your captain, Jesus Christ.

The day will come for us all when we shall have to say farewell to the world and its allurements. What a comfort it will be for the brother in that hour to know that for love of God he renounced the world of his own accord, and gave himself in life and in death to his commander, Christ. That death will be a great victory for all eternity.

"He that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it" (Matt. 16 :25) . "To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne . . ." (Apoc. 3:21). What a glorious aim in life is that! Such a destiny makes life worth living, no

matter what our trials and hardships may be. The life of a brother may be humble and hidden from the eyes of the world, but it leads to a "never fading crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5:4). Every good Christian may attain to that crown. But the good brother does so more securely, more peacefully and more gloriously.

"If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me" (Matt. 19: 21). That is the invitation which the Son of God Himself gives to generous souls. It is a call to serve Christ with personal devotion, to give up everything for His sake. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: . . ." (Ps. 83: S). "Blessed are thy men, and blessed are thy servants, who stand before thee always . . ." (3 Kings 10:8). "For better is one day in thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners" (Ps. 83: 11).

The good brother may be a servant in the House of the Lord in this life, but the servants of God "shall reign forever and ever" (Apoc. 22:5) in the life to come.

"What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" Those who follow Christ as religious are taking the surest means to save their souls, for they are His companions to whom He said: "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14: 2). And their place shall be near the very throne of God. On earth they were close to Christ by their consecrated lives; in heaven they shall be close to Him in glory. On earth they left all to follow Him. In heaven all He has will be theirs. It is service and sacrifice here; hereafter it will be joy with the Eternal King forever. Such is the career of the man who leaves all to follow Christ. The world has for its votaries nothing comparable to this glorious destiny. "Better is one day in thy courts above thousands" (Ps. 83; U)

XV. YOUNG WOMEN AND THE HIGHER LIFE

God uses all His creatures in His designs. To womankind He has paid the greatest honours. He asked for the cooperation of a woman when He sent His only Son into the world. And Christ while engaged on earth in doing His Father's business, accepted the help and ministrations of women, and set them as examples of piety and charity. At the great sacrifice on Calvary, there stood at the foot of the cross the sinless Mary and the penitent Magdalen.

The mission of Christ was only begun while He was among men. By the Church He continues that mission and will continue it to the end. His Church turns to women for their help even as He Himself did. Good Catholic mothers are real helpers of Christ. The woman who gives a good example as mother and wife in the home is doing God's work. The family is her mission field. If she does her work there as a good Catholic mother, she will receive an eternal recompense. Millions of women have become saints just by being good Catholic wives and mothers. Women, you have a noble work right at home.

But there are some women who experience an inclination to a life higher than the ordinary. They feel a strong impulse to devote themselves to lofty ideals. They desire to lead a life of sublime virtue and to spend themselves for the welfare of others. They are not satisfied with doing merely what they must, but aim at doing all they can.

They reflect that Jesus Christ so loved them as to give His life for them. And they hear His appealing words: "Behold My heart which has loved you so much; child, give Me thy heart." Knowing that Jesus wants their services, but that He does not command the higher life, but only invites them to it, they desire to satisfy that divine Heart.

Many women spending their lives in the round of worldly duties strive to lead this higher interior life. By frequent Holy Communion and by deeds of zeal and charity, they satisfy somewhat their lofty spiritual aspirations. Some are so circumstanced that they cannot aspire to anything more. They have the spirit and desire to advance higher, but their duties of life do not permit it. In God's sight, these pious souls have all the merit of supreme sacrifice, for God sees the heart and the intention and rewards accordingly. There are many cloistered souls in the world.

There are other women, many in fact, so situated in life that, if they receive the .call to a life consecrated entirely to the service of God and their own sanctification, they are able to follow it. These favoured souls become the beloved spouses of Christ. They leave home and friends and the comforts of life to belong entirely to Jesus.

Are you one of these? Are you so situated that you can give yourself unreservedly to the service of God as a sister in a religious order?

The Church of God today has need of the sisterhoods more than ever. Every bishop in the country is appealing for sisters for his diocese. No one can do certain work in a parish like the sisters. There may be devoted women who teach and care for the little ones and the helpless, but only the sisters can give all of their time and their first interests to it, in the way that helps most the service of God and the salvation of souls.

Every parish that has a convent feels itself blessed. The sisters are truly the Red Cross Society of God's army. They help priests and people in a way which only their sublime ministrations can do. Besides, they are sanctifying themselves while helping and sanctifying others. They are working for Jesus Christ and with Him.

Like the holy women who accompanied our Lord in His missions throughout the Holy Land, ministering to His wants, the sisters help Christ by ministering to Him in His church. The Church is Jesus Christ in the world, carrying out by human instrumentality the work He inaugurated while on earth. That is why He says of it : "He who hears you, hears me." That is why the sisters, in giving their ministrations and their lives to the service of the Church, are consecrating themselves to the person and service of Jesus Christ. What a noble career for the young woman who feels the call to the religious life and is in a position to respond!

God in the mystery of His plans sees fit to depend on men and women for the carrying on of His work. He could do everything directly if He wished, or He could employ angels as His ministers. N Instead, it pleases Him to choose weak men and women as His aides. He employs the ministry of priests, brothers and sisters to accomplish His good purposes among mankind.

Perhaps His reason for so doing is to honour us mortals. What a glory it is to be associated with God Almighty in His work! We may envy the Angel Gabriel, who was employed by God to carry the message of the Incarnation to Mary. But do we realize that God employs priests and religious men and women to carry the fruits of the Incarnation into the souls and lives of men!

Every time a sister, by her prayers, penances, good works or sufferings, helps a soul to draw nearer to Christ, she is doing in a certain degree what our Blessed Mother did who gave Christ to us by the Incarnation. Mary gave us Jesus. The good sister, by her consecrated life, brings Jesus into the souls of men. She brings Jesus to those who, except for her devoted zeal, might never have known Him.

Of course we can all do that by being zealous Catholics, but the sister does it as a profession. It is her life. She is bringing Jesus into the lives of little children in the classroom. She brings Jesus into the lives of worldly men by her silent and holy presence as she walks through the streets or attends devoutly the services of the Church. She brings Jesus into the hearts of sinners whom her gentle ministrations affect in hospitals, in homes, and even in prisons. She is saving souls not only when she is teaching catechism, saying her beads or reciting the office, but all day long, by every act she performs, since she does all for Christ. Her every act is thus the very best of prayers.

Many women feel that life is empty, that there is little in it worthwhile, that it is one round of vanity or disappointment. Sisters in religion never feel that way. For them every day is full, full of the things which count most, the things which count for time and eternity. They spend themselves in efforts for the spiritual and bodily welfare of others. Their deeds are truly worthwhile, benefitting as they do their fellow beings.

Besides being worthwhile here, these deeds also reach out in their effect to the hereafter. The actions which fill up the life of the sisters go with them beyond the grave and stand with them before the tribunal of God. The good sister realizes that all she does is done for her Spouse, Jesus Christ. What a joy it will be to her in that final hour, "which most people dread, to know that she is going into His presence, whom she has loved and lived for. Her hands will be full of the very things God values most, things which cost service and sacrifice.

It is the abiding thought that all they do is for Jesus, that gives the sisters their wonderful serenity which all admire and envy. They know that they are pleasing God and have His favour. What does all the rest matter! They know that He takes as done unto Himself all that they do for others in His name and for His love. That is why they are so content with what people ordinarily consider a hard life. Sometimes you will hear persons say that they do not understand how so many of our refined and delicate young ladies can stand the arduous life of a sister. No one finds that hard which is done out of love. Love much, and no labour will seem too great or too mean.

There is no love like that which Jesus Christ inspires in the hearts of His followers. Once it is enkindled in the soul, heaven begins. The sisters have that strong love of Christ which has made heroic characters. All through the ages, Jesus has attracted to His service the noblest of souls.

Do not fancy that the call to the sisterhoods is only for the very exceptional girl. True greatness in God's estimation is a pure heart and a generous will. All can cultivate these qualities. The desire, the strong desire, to be dear to God and worthy of a vocation, is the first step toward becoming worthy.

A holy life must precede a vocation to the sisterhood. A young woman must show God, by doing her best where she is, that she aspires to ascend higher. Let her do her part, and He will do His. He is more desirous of advancing His children than they are of being advanced. Prayer and Holy Communion are the best arguments with God for one who desires Him to accept her among His chosen ones as a sister.

If you only knew how much the Church needs devoted lives now, you would pray hard for yourself, for your friends, that God might grant vocations to the sisterhood. Every order of sisters is short-handed. There is so much for them to do, and there are so few to do it. In many orders, one sister is doing the work of three. Many are breaking down from overwork. They offer joyously even this sacrifice of health for their Beloved, Jesus Christ, but surely we have young women who will go to their aid, not only to help them, but to help the countless souls whom they serve.

It is a call to the colours. The standard of Christ summons our young women to fight under it. That standard is carried by Jesus Christ, who first sacrificed Himself for us before asking us to sacrifice ourselves for Him. He invites our young women to take up His cross and follow after Him.

The life of the sisters is a way of the cross. It is also a royal road to heaven. The girl who becomes a sister, has much to suffer; she carries the cross of Christ. There are privations and fatigue and misunderstandings and disappointments in convent life as in the world. But Jesus experienced all these before us. There are sufferings, no doubt, but, oh, what consolation! We have to suffer anyway, no matter what our career in life. What a joy to realize that we are suffering for One we love and One who loves us!

Only the young woman with a generous soul can think of being a sister. Selfish persons cannot follow close to the generous Christ. And the sisters follow Him very close. But if a girl has a strong desire to belong to our Lord, and a will to serve Him in all things, He will strengthen her as He has strengthened so many others.

The sisterhoods need recruits. They are appealing for help. But desirous as they are for new members, they want only the right kind. In the Great War, our country needed helpers of all kinds, but eager as was the government for recruits for the various departments, it was nevertheless exacting in its requirements. The sisterhoods, too, have a high standard.

What requirements, what qualifications, must a woman possess in order to be a sister? That all depends on the order in question. There is one basic requirement for all the sisterhoods — virtue. That does not mean that the novice must be faultless. But it does mean a true desire to be good and a firm determination not to yield to temptation.

Those who are most sorely tempted sometimes turn out to be the holiest and the most serviceable to others. Those who rise promptly after a fall, and endeavour not to fall again, are practising virtue. A sublime character is frequently developed by self-conquest, and those who have hard struggles with themselves know how to be helpful to others. The virtue, therefore, which is required for a sister's career is a strong will to keep God's law, shown by the avoidance of whatever tends to sin.

Moreover, as the sisters form one large family in the convent, it is necessary that a congenial, or at least not a disagreeable, disposition should be associated with virtue. Sisters are brought into contact with people of all sorts. Their disposition should be such as to win rather than repel those among whom they work.

Some orders which are devoted entirely to higher education, require a good general education in those who desire to join them. Other orders, engaged in primary or secondary teaching, demand of prospective members just an ordinary grammar school or high school education. But the majority of the orders have a place for all women of good will, regardless of education. Some sisters care for infants, cripples, the aged, the wayward and the orphan. Sisters have a part in everything which ministers to the welfare of others. No woman of normal qualifications need feel that

the sisterhoods are closed to her if she is willing to do what she is best fitted for. For further details about the sisterhoods read *Convent Life*³ a book written for those who want definite information about nuns and vocations.

If after consideration, you feel that you have a call to a higher life as a sister, consult your pastor or confessor. Or, better still, go to one of the convents known to you and have a talk with one of the sisters. Do not be afraid that they will capture you unawares. Desirous as they are of adding to their order, they cannot accept those unsuited to their work and rule. It is harder to get into the convent than to get out of it.

The step is too important for precipitate action, taken without every consideration. Where there persists a strong and constant desire to leave all and follow Christ, nothing should keep the maiden back. She must expect difficulties and discouragements, but a true vocation becomes stronger by such obstacles.

No one ever accomplishes anything worthwhile without opposition. The only way to escape criticism and opposition is to sit down and attempt nothing. That brings you nowhere. If a vocation is worth anything, it is worth a struggle. And what a glorious thing it is to be associated with Jesus Christ in carrying on His work! What an honour to be a partner of God in saving souls and bringing peace and cheer and holiness into the lives of men!

Oh, it is hard, yes. The life demands a great deal from weak human nature. But look to what it leads! It is a path which leads straight to God. Moreover, even in this life, it gives a peace which surpasses understanding. The knowledge that she is the beloved companion and spouse of Jesus Christ transforms her, and makes her feel that she is blessed indeed to be able to work and suffer for Him.

And He will give Himself as the reward exceedingly great. We cannot surpass Him in generosity. We can never regret anything we have done for Him. If He gives eternal life to those who keep His commandments, what will He give to the good sister who has sacrificed herself and all she possessed to His holy service!

We must all part with the world and its allurements some day. What a joy that last hour, so dreaded by many, will bring to the sister who has left all, of her own accord, at the call of her Beloved Death for such a one will only be the removal of the barrier which separates Lover and beloved.

All of us may attain to that blessed union with God, but the good sister's path is serene and secure and glorious. Hers will be the very perfection of espousals, for on earth she listened to Christ's voice saying: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me!" In life she followed Him. Beyond, He will be hers for all eternity!

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³ *Convent Life* — the meaning of a Religious Vocation. By Martin J. Scott, S. J.