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# THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN

BY THE REV.  
BERTRAM WOLFERSTAN, S.J.



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# THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN

BY BERTRAM WOLVERSTAN, S.J.

## The Fourth Commandment

“Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.” (Exodus, xx., 12.)

THUS far the words of Holy Scripture ; but the Catholic Church, guided by the Holy Ghost and speaking through the mouth of her doctors and pastors, instructs us that this Commandment includes not only the duties of children towards their parents, but also those of parents to their children. Further, we are to understand that the word “parent” comprises, in general, all who have lawful authority over others ; and “children” signifies those who are subject to the lawful control of any one else.

It is a matter of common experience to find that while parents are very ready to insist on the duties of their children, they are slow to realise the obligations of the father and mother. So we may consider the Duties of Parents towards their Children, because, if these are properly discharged, it is probable that, in the great majority of cases, the duties of the children towards their parents will be fulfilled as a matter of course.

## The Responsibility of Parents

The Catholic Church has never ceased to urge upon those contemplating marriage the due consideration

of the importance of the step they propose to take, the serious responsibility they are about to incur, the difficulties that will present themselves, and the magnitude of the exertions that will be necessary if they are to acquit themselves worthily of their duty.

But as regards those who are already married and parents of children, there is no further choice. The duties and responsibilities are now theirs; and nothing remains but to consider how they may best fulfil them. What have they done? By their agency children have been brought into the world; and these children have not only bodies to be cared for, but also souls that may be saved or lost. Of course no soul capable of reason will ever be lost except as the consequence of its own free-will wrongly exercised. This being so, it is the duty of parents so to train their children in habits of virtue, that the chances of a perverse use of freedom from parental control in future may be reduced as much as possible. And if a soul is lost during childhood, or afterwards, in consequence of parental neglect or bad example, its parents may rest assured they will be called to account before the Judgement-seat of God. We read in Holy Scripture the account of the first murder committed in the history of mankind. Almighty God not only required from the elder brother an account of the whereabouts of the younger one; but, on receiving an answer disavowing any responsibility, He cursed him for his crime, saying, “. . . the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth to Me from the earth” (Gen. iv., 10). What terrible form may not the malediction of the Almighty take upon parents who have neglected their duties, and whose children’s souls cry to Him from among the lost?

### **The Care of our Children a Matter of Prayer**

It cannot be too much or too often insisted on that the care and education of children is a spiritual duty of a very high order. Holy Church emphasises this by her

solemn approval of so many Religious Orders and Congregations of both sexes whose principal duty it is to teach and train the young. In these communities, Masses and prayers are unceasingly offered up that they may worthily discharge the all-important duties confided to them. If this be so in the case of those who are not permitted to undertake the care of children without long and careful training; how much more is it necessary for those who have had no experience and little or no previous instruction in the matter? And of how much more consequence does it become in the case of parents who, from the necessity of having to work for their living, can only devote a limited portion of their time to their parental duties? Most certainly the care of their children should be the subject of unceasing prayer.

The grace of being a good father or mother is undoubtedly a great blessing; but, like other graces and blessings, it can only be obtained by the free gift of God. Furthermore, Almighty God has the right, which He sometimes exercises, of withholding His graces from those who will not ask for them; and He wishes to be asked in prayer. St. Paul tells us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v., 17): and, among other petitions in the Lord's Prayer is one for "our daily bread" (Luke, xi, 3). The Church Catechism explains this last to mean that "we pray that God may give us daily all that is necessary for soul and body." And who can have so many necessities, temporal and spiritual, as those who will one day be held accountable, not only for their own souls, but also for the assistance they have given to their children to the same end?

When we are in temporal necessity, we are ready enough to fly to God and ask His assistance. We constantly hear of Mass being offered for a "temporal favour," for "recovery from sickness," for "a safe journey," and the like; but how seldom for a "blessing on a marriage," or for "our children"—unless, indeed, such requests are in nearly every instance veiled behind "a private intention!"



### **Their Children's Salvation should be the Parents' Chief Care**

It has already been insisted upon that the care and education of children is a spiritual duty. Unfortunately very many parents seem to lose sight of this end altogether. In a few cases, everything is subordinated to "getting on in life," as regards the boys: but, in many more, the boys are allowed to do very much as they please, and, for lack of seasonable advice or correction, grow up into idle, mannerless young men, who are no credit to anyone. Much the same holds good concerning the girls; but in their case, by "getting on in life" is understood "getting married off" as soon as possible.

Both extremes are equally dangerous. The first class of parents may well ask themselves: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi., 26). The other sort of parent is even more foolish, for his children run great risk of eternal ruin, without even the attempt to gain anything in this life. This consideration should convince us that

#### **Children must be Trained as well as Taught**

It must be borne in mind that, although "education"—by which is meant the cultivation of the mind by the acquisition of useful knowledge—may be, quite possibly with advantage, deferred for some time, "training"—that is, the moulding of character—should commence as early in life as possible. Hereafter, at school, both will—it may be hoped—go hand-in-hand; but if the training process be put off until the child leaves home, endless difficulty will be caused from want of "a proper bringing-up." By that time, habits will have been formed which can only be broken with difficulty—perhaps not at all. Nay, the absence of proper home-training will be no small obstacle to the acquirement of that very education for which children are sent to school.

Nor must it be supposed that when parents send their children to school their duties in the matter are ended. The best training of a school can be entirely undone by lack of co-operation on the part of parents at home. Worse than this may happen. A child naturally leans to what is easy and agreeable. From the very nature of things, it places its parents on a pedestal, sees everything from their point of view, and learns to adopt their principles and standards. On the other hand, discipline of any sort is difficult and distasteful, while the school-teachers in no way occupy the same position in a child's estimation. If, then, it sees that at home no account is made of the principles and maxims of the school, the child will learn, naturally enough, to make light of these as of no importance—as only “part of the lessons” which it is to the interest of the teacher to insist on.

Even this is not the worst. A time will come when the child will be a child no longer. It will then have learned to think, and judge men and matters for itself. And perhaps the neglectful parents in this matter may find themselves the sorrowful objects of their children's criticism: and may even be told, in answer to some remonstrance:—“Well, you should have taught me better when I was young.”

### How shall we Train our Children?

To many minds, the very word “training” has an ominous sound. Visions of books of rules and schemes of diet rise before the mind's eye, and the conclusion is hastily arrived at that one might as well be a school-master at once. And yet there is no cause for alarm. Children can be trained in the simplest and most natural manner, and the process can be continuous—a matter of the greatest importance. The method is simply that of good example. And thus it will appear that the care of our children is one of those things that blesseth him that gives and him that takes; for we cannot give a good example to our family without being continually on our own good behaviour,

Now, how does good example train the young? Everything a child learns comes at first by imitation. The simplest instance of this may be found in the matter of speech. Children born and bred in the Highlands, in Yorkshire, and in the south of England, will speak English; but how different is their accent and intonation! Why this difference? Because they learned to speak the language they heard spoken by those around them. In the same manner, we may notice two families. The children of one have no appearance of having been continuously drilled into any particular course of behaviour; yet they are simply and naturally quiet, obedient, and inoffensive. Those of the other are loud, boisterous, and unruly—reminding us, not of the historic family where forty children conducted themselves like one, but of that other where every child conducted itself like forty. Perhaps it may happen that the members of this last family appear “in company,” as it is called; they then assume an air of disciplined suavity, much more irritating to contemplate than their previous bad behaviour. The first family are simply behaving as they have been accustomed to behave at home—that is, with moderation and restraint. The second have been, in like manner, conducting themselves as usual, until it was considered necessary that they should be washed and brushed into some semblance of order—when, too, along with the “Sunday clothes,” the “company manners” were produced for the delectation of those present.

Nor is this true only of external behaviour. Children are not only as imitative as monkeys, but also exceedingly observant. They may perhaps not understand the meaning of what they see, just then; but they may bear the fact in mind, and work it out even years afterwards. But in the present, if they notice that their parents are habitually untruthful and insincere they will, by mere force of imitation, develop the same characteristic. Nor must it be forgotten that, though unnoticed and silent, the child often sees both sides of the question. It hears the effusive expressions of



delight which greet the unexpected, and possibly unwelcome, guest ; and it also notices—and perhaps treasures up for future use—the unflattering remarks which follow on the departure of the same. If this be so, what is to be said of parents who are habitually profane of speech in the presence of their family : or even, in extreme cases, appear before them while under the influence of drink ?

### **There are no such things as Trifles in this Matter**

There is, of course, a great difference between faults and faults if these are considered by themselves. For example : it might be a very slight sin to take a few pence from a rich person who would probably never miss them, and would certainly suffer no inconvenience from the loss ; but it might easily be a grave matter to take the same from a beggar, because the loss would be a serious one. When, however, we consider the question of small faults in children, they cease to appear small if we reflect that they are either forming or strengthening a habit which may be very difficult to overcome in after-life. We read in the lives of the Saints that they habitually practised heroic acts of virtue and mortification which appear to be quite impossible to ordinary mortals. How did they arrive at these ? Not in a day, nor even in a year. They began by small acts and by constant exercise these increased, and became habitual to them.

Now, childhood is the period of life when nature and will are most plastic. Consequently, a child's character can—as a rule—be moulded into almost any form that those who have the care of it desire. It becomes necessary, therefore, to check the beginnings of bad habits as soon as they are noticed, and this even though the individual actions themselves seem trifling. In like manner, tiny indications of virtuous dispositions should be noticed at once and encouraged.

By “checking the beginnings of bad habits,” it is by no means implied that every small fault should be visited

by punishment; it will usually be sufficient for the purpose that a child finds that what it has done has been observed. Equally of course is it undesirable that when a child does well in small matters it should be indiscriminately praised or rewarded; for that may very easily induce repetition, not from the original motive but for the purpose of being noticed. Of the entire human race, children are perhaps the most human; and it is part of human nature to delight in appreciation and praise and to resent correction. The very young keenly enjoy the former; but they have not the intense disgust at being found fault with that is so often a characteristic of more mature years. Wherefore it may be laid down that that which may grow into a confirmed habit is not a trifle; and it should be checked or encouraged—with moderation in each case—as soon as it becomes apparent.

### Children should gradually be accustomed to act from Principle

Although the training of a child is most necessary, it is only a means to an end. Training consists in helping the young to form such a character as will enable them to do or say the right thing in after-life, when those who brought them up are no longer at hand. At the beginning of the process almost unceasing supervision may be necessary; but as soon as possible this should be gradually relaxed, and the first idea of personal responsibility engendered by the feeling that they are "trusted." It is quite possible that in many cases this may at first appear to be a failure; several times a child may be relied on to do what is right, and as often betray the confidence reposed in it. But unless a child be altogether vicious and depraved by nature—which one would be sorry to think occurs often—its sense of right and wrong will most likely prevail. In this latter case, a triumph has been gained; while, in

the former, the child would probably have done wrong in spite of any care that might have been exercised.

It is sometimes asserted that to talk about "principle" to children is ridiculous. If it be ridiculous, it may be asked :—" Whose fault is that ? Is it the fault of innocent childhood which, with proper training, can be induced to do nearly anything ; or of the incompetent trainers who failed in their duty ?" And it may also be asked :—" If children are not trained to act from principle early in life, when precisely is the process to begin ?" In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord told His hearers :—" Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them : otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven " (Matt. vi., 1) : and St. Paul cautions servants against " serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men," telling them " as the servants of Christ" to do " the will of God from the heart" (Eph. vi., 6). If this does not imply action from principle, it is hard to understand what it does imply. And the Catholic Church, imitating her Master, has never ceased to warn her children against acting from motives of mere human respect.

Finally, as has been already remarked, children are very observant, and they are also quick to detect " shams" or inconsistency. Must it not then appear to them a contradiction that parents should constantly instruct their boys and girls in the " principles" of the Catholic Faith ; and afterwards show, by evident lack of confidence in them, that they have no belief in their good-will to carry those principles into effect ?

### What shall we teach our Children ?

It ought to be quite clear from what has already been said that the training of our children is a personal matter for parents ; and also that as much can be accomplished by example as by precept. It will now be well to call attention to details.

The first and most important question is that of " spiritual duties," as they are called. (It is taken for

granted that parents are alive to the importance of having their children baptised as soon as possible after birth.) A good parent will, of course, not be content with teaching the children to "say their prayers," but will endeavour to make them understand what it is they are doing, its importance, and whom they are addressing when they pray. As prayer should be the first duty in the morning, so it should be the last at night. Almighty God was our First Beginning: He will be our Last End: it is only becoming that we should so consider Him in our daily life. Morning and night prayers ought, therefore, to be regarded as a sacred duty, not to be omitted on any account. When children come to look upon prayer in this light, we may hope they will have formed a habit which will last their lifetime.

Although Holy Church does not insist that Sundays and Holidays of Obligation shall be made days of gloom and burden of spirit, and does not forbid innocent recreation at these times, she always supposes that a notable part of the day is spent in God's service. Some people fulfil this duty by going to assist at the earliest Mass, after which they seem to think there is no more to be done. Others, again, hail Sunday and the day of obligation as days on which to lie abed till the latest possible moment which will allow them to go to the latest possible Mass, and sometimes do not appear at that one until the latest possible moment. Many, of course, attend Benediction; but how many ever think of being present at a catechism or an instruction in the church? An idea is abroad that these are only affairs for children. Well, so they are, chiefly, in order that children may be grounded in the Truths of their Faith. But there is always much that can be learned by older people; and in the case of those who, by some misfortune, have not been thoroughly instructed in their religion when young, there is great need of making good the deficiency now. However this may be, there are two very good reasons for at least an occasional attendance at catechism by parents and grown-up



people. First, there is the example set to their own children and others; for it thus appears evident that the older members of the congregation do not regard the religious instruction of the young as a matter which only concerns the clergy. Secondly, a parent may arm himself against some of these questions, often put to their elders by intelligent children, which cause embarrassment if they cannot be answered there and then.

It is also an excellent practice for parents to receive Holy Communion on certain fixed days, and to teach their children to do the same. By doing this it appears that they do not act from impulse, or even because they have nothing better to do; but because they have made a rule and keep it.

Again, the young are not bound to fast; neither are their elders when engaged in certain kinds of work. But this should not mean that no difference at all is to be made between Lent, etc., and other times. Something can and should be done—e.g., abstaining from entertainments, both public and private, restricting the diet at home to the simpler and plainer kinds of food which, while equally beneficial, clearly mark the difference between the penitential seasons appointed by the Church and other times.

### Obedience

In these days of so-called "independence," the general disinclination to do as one is told hardly needs to be pointed out. Much of this spirit is, no doubt, due to the perversity of human nature; but much more is certainly attributable to the lack of proper training at home—the habit of obedience was not formed there.

Almighty God, in the beginning of the world, established the family as the unit of society; and ordained that the father should be the head of it. This received its most striking illustration in the Holy Family at Nazareth—the charge of the Infant Jesus and His Blessed Mother was confided to St. Joseph, the least



perfect member; and the commands of the Almighty in respect to the Holy Family were communicated to him alone.

Of the conduct of our Lord, when young, all we are told is that "he was subject to them" (Luke, ii., 51). Of course, in the case of the Divine Child, He needed no training to obey; but in the case of the ordinary child it is far otherwise. Child human nature likes to have its own way and, if the child has not prudent parents, generally contrives to have it. It would be well if parents would reflect upon the harm they do on the one hand by injudicious commands, and on the other by sentimental yielding. A parent should (1) Never give any command to a child without consideration; (2) Never tell it to do anything which cannot be done; (3) insist upon it doing what it is told—and at once; (4) contrive that, from time to time, a child should be told to do or not to do something—this for the purpose of forming and strengthening a habit of obedience. Fond mothers are particularly warned against giving their children anything they choose to cry for. A squalling brat may make itself very unpleasant for a time, but it will soon stop squalling if that appears to be fruitless; while a spoilt child will be a nuisance to all who have to do with it, and what is worse, grow up into a disobedient man or woman. A child of this sort once worried his mother for half-an-hour or so, being constantly refused what he asked; at the end of that time, his mother gave in, saying, with a weary air:—"Very well, yes, for the sake of a quiet life." The harm was done; and thenceforth that child got anything he wanted "for the sake of a quiet life."

### Truthfulness

By the Eighth Commandment, not only is false witness against our neighbour forbidden, but also falsehood of every sort. Nor is there any escape from the obligation under cover of the excuse that "after all, a lie is only a venial sin." For just as we are for-

bidden to commit grave sin, so we are forbidden to commit venial sin, although the penalty is different. Furthermore, there is no habit so difficult to cure as this one of lying. This arises from the fact that it grows unperceived; and, quite possibly, ends in the victim of it hardly knowing whether he or she is speaking the truth or not. This being so, parents must be on the watch for the beginnings of such a bad habit and correct it as soon as it shows itself. The more frequent occasions will probably be found in "lies of excuse," i.e., small deviations from the truth, made to hide some fault and escape punishment. It is well worth consideration whether it may not sometimes be a good plan to condone small faults, when a child "owns up manfully," as it is called; but lying in any form—words, deception, cheating, and so on—should be a matter for prompt reproof. And here again we see what valuable lessons can be taught by good example. If the children see that their father and mother are very careful in the matter of truth, and also in that of just and honourable dealing with others, they will be led to imitate their parents, and become truthful and fair-dealing themselves.

### The Companions of our Children

Though parents set their children the best possible example, it will be all to no purpose if its effect be undone by anyone else. This result may be very easily arrived at by indifference as to the friendships our children form. Of course, many parents are most careful to bring up their boys and girls well, and to the companionship of such well-brought-up children no exception can be taken. But unhappily not a few parents are not of this kind; their children have learned all sorts of undesirable habits unchecked, and their ideas are apt to be wrong-headed and perverse.

It becomes of importance, therefore, to notice what sort of friends our children take unto themselves, and to separate them from such as do them harm. The

question will no doubt be asked: "How are we to do this? Are we to keep the children always at home under our own eyes; or are we to follow them, step by step, at their play?" In neither of these ways. The first method would most likely produce the "good little boy" of a certain kind of story-book—from whom kind Heaven preserve us! The second—will make the children deceitful, while not affording their parents any information. There remains a third, and more practicable method. Notice the manners and behaviour of the children, and this when they return from the company of others. If they have been under any undesirable influence, they are almost certain to show it in some way: they will express strange ideas; they may be more difficult to manage, may want something they have hitherto been content without, and say in support of their request that: "So-and-so always has or does this"—perhaps vulgar or profane expressions may slip from a child's lips in an unguarded moment. Now these things may seem trifling; but they are the straws that show how the wind blows. And so, when any of them—or indeed anything which points to some undesirable influence—happens, it is time to inquire into the matter. The influence must be looked for either at home or abroad. If we can conscientiously say it is not at home, it must be elsewhere, and that elsewhere will probably be among the children's friends; and when the companionship of any other child is found to be doing harm to our own, it is time that it was stopped. Children—especially boys—are great hero-worshippers. Being for the most part very impressionable, they are easily captivated by any assumption of greater daring or independence by others and try to imitate them. But there are always some who are leaders; and sometimes they do not lead others into any good. Whichever part their children play, parents will do well to be on the alert to see what comes of it, and so be prepared to counteract the effects of bad or undesirable friendships as soon as they become apparent.

## Reading

There seems to be no end to the multiplication of books in our time ; and this avalanche of printed matter—much of it cannot be called literature, with any approach to truth—is proudly pointed to as a sign of progress, while those who produce it are supposed to be, in some way, benefactors of their species. This might be true if the object of it all were to make people better in any way. Nor would there be any harm done if the only result attained were that of innocent amusement. “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,” and the same applies to Jack’s sister ; not only recreation, but much useful information is to be obtained by reading. But—possibly on account of competition among authors and publishers—very often it seems to be thought necessary to introduce a good deal of highly-spiced matter into some of these books, and consequently a large proportion of such reading must be classed as dangerous to faith and morals. It therefore behoves parents anxious for the spiritual well-being of their children to exercise as much supervision as possible over the books that come into the children’s hands. As to the reading of books that are avowedly bad, and the harm that may come from it, parents would do well to study the Instruction issued some years ago by the Bishop of Birmingham : “On Reading Bad Books.” This can still be obtained from Messrs. Canning, 33 Snow Hill, Birmingham ; price one penny.

But—bad books apart—much harm sometimes arises, especially in the case of girls, from the reading of many of the modern romances. Not only does the reading of such waste time that might be better employed, but it works mischief by imbuing the girls with false notions of life—in fact, many of them are responsible for more harm than the much-ridiculed “shilling shocker” or “penny dreadful.” The bulk of the matter in these last is so evidently extravagant, not to say impossible, that the worst to be expected from their perusal is waste of time, or possibly a nightmare.



But the writers of some modern novels idealise what it pleases them to call "love," i.e., their conception of it; and the pupil in their school learns that it is the only thing worth living for. All that is pleasing to the eye or attractive to the senses is there set forth in great detail; but the uselessness of the lives led by the characters described, who would appear to exist only to get rid of time and money, is seldom or never alluded to. Most of us have to work—and work hard—for our living, and romantic occurrences will probably be few and far between; but monotonous commonplace details will abound and these are never, or very seldom, touched upon by writers of romance.

Reading good and wholesome books is a relaxation and beneficial; but excessive, and still more injurious, reading is an occupation which, by distracting the attention or making the reader discontented, will work more harm than good.

### Consideration for Others

There is hardly any defect so inherent in human nature, and which so easily grows into a confirmed habit if not corrected early in life, as selfishness. No one can live his or her life by themselves for themselves. We are brought into daily and hourly contact with our fellow-creatures; and, this being so, it is necessary for the well-being of the family and of society at large to think of others as well as of ourselves. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, . . . . and thy neighbour as thyself." (Luke, x., 27). St. Gregory explains that, when our Lord sent out the seventy-two disciples *two-by-two* to preach the Gospel, it was to inculcate the duty of charity: for "the objects of charity are two-fold, God and our neighbour: and between less than two, charity cannot be practised." (Hom. xvii. in Evang.). This is cleverly illustrated by Dickens, in *Oliver Twist*, in the conversation between Fagin and Noah Claypole: "To keep yourself safe is your Number One: for that you depend upon me. To



keep my little business snug, I depend upon you : that is my Number One. The more you value your Number One, the more careful you must be of mine : and so you see a general regard for Number One keeps us all together, else we should all go to pieces in no time."

Of course, all our efforts in the direction of charity ought to be primarily to please Almighty God : but besides this, we each have a "little business" of our own, which is to live on good terms with our neighbours and secure their affection. The selfish person fails in both directions ; he offends God, whose Commandment he breaks ; he fails in his duty to his neighbour, by whom he is most probably detested.

Children, should therefore, be trained day by day—there is no other method—to think of others. This is one of those duties the neglect of which may bring its own punishment. Parents who do not teach their boys and girls to be kind and considerate to others may one day find that they are unconsidered themselves—and by their own children.

In this matter of consideration for others, the poor should have the first claim. Not seldom an idea obtains that the giving of alms, or assistance in any form, is a matter for "grown-ups" only. Why should it be ? If children get accustomed to spend all their pocket-money on themselves alone, when are they to learn any better ? How can we expect a selfish child to grow up into a large-hearted, sympathetic man ? "But," objects a fond mother, "if my child gives his little pocket-money, or any part of it, to others, he will have to go without himself." Just so, Madam : and a very good thing too ! Nothing is of any value that costs nothing.

Outside the question of alms, there are the relations of children with their brothers and sisters. In practical training in unselfishness, the poor certainly have the advantage of the rich. There is so much to be done, so little to do it with, and so small a space to do it in—perhaps there are so many to be done for—that each must yield to someone else on occasions, if life is to go on at all ; and so the lesson is learned in this way.

But in the case of the well-to-do there is enough and to spare for every member of the family to go their own way, irrespective of the rest ; and here it is that training is more particularly required. Nor should it be forgotten that " things " are not the only matters in which consideration, or the want of it, can be shown. Other people have feelings, and those feelings are capable of being hurt ; and they are more often hurt by want of thought than by want of heart—want of thought before speaking.

In general an act of kindness, to be appreciated, need not be anything great, nor cost anything except effort : and trifles often give the most pleasure. It is not the gift of the lover, but the love of the giver that counts.

### Good Manners

Closely allied with the foregoing is the question of good manners. Before saying anything on the subject, it is well to clear the mind of sundry wrong ideas concerning them. To begin with, a certain sort of boy seems to regard good manners as " unmanly " ; while his sisters are apt to resent any well-intentioned act of courtesy, as an attempt at familiarity which must be repressed at once. And yet neither brothers nor sisters are to blame—the parents should have taught them better. But again, many parents themselves are just as much at sea as their children, and will tell any one who ventures to remonstrate that " company manners " are only hypocrisy. Just so : " company " manners, by which they mean politeness to strangers and rudeness to their family, are a mild form of hypocrisy ; but good manners are not so by any means : they are simply the rules of Christian charity put into daily practice. Charity towards our neighbour consists in being offensive to no one ; in trying to have the same regard for the feelings of others that we desire them to have for our own ; a readiness to render those small services which show that we think of someone else besides ourselves ; and last, but not least, that we should readily acknowledge anything done for ourselves. There is an enormous

difference between children and children. And children are as they have been made, or at least allowed to be, in their own homes.

The training of children in good manners cannot begin too soon. The earlier it is begun, the easier it will be, for it is as easy to form a good habit in young children as a bad one. To put the matter on its lowest ground : it may be supposed that parents wish the boys and girls to do them credit, and pass as well brought up. And if they do, let them put the work in hand at once.

### Habits of Order, Method, etc.

Why is it that some people do an enormous amount of work yet are never in a hurry, and even have time to help others? Why is it that others are always in a hurry, always full of business, generally pressed for time, and yet do very little work? Why is it that one man can lay his hand on anything he wants, just at the moment he wants it? While another seems to spend most of his time hunting for things which he usually fails to find until they are of no use? The reply to all these questions is the same : the first, in each case, have been trained, the second have not. Who should have trained them? Where? and when? Answer : Their parents ; at home ; when they were young. This may seem quite unimportant now ; but if it be overlooked, a youth may find himself hereafter beginning work with an undesirable habit to overcome which he need not have acquired.

### Simplicity of Life, Amusements, etc.

In many ways the training of our children seems to be contradictory. Asked what he intends to do with his boy, a parent will probably reply : " There's plenty of time to think of that ; we must not make him old beforehand." This kind of parent not seldom complains that his boys and girls want things he never thought of at their age, and that what satisfied him by no means contents them. Is it possible that the explanation of

this lies in the fact that we are unconsciously "spoiling" our children? It looks like it. Why are so many children sickly in appearance? They live in a great city, you say, and cannot be expected to look as robust and healthy as those bred in the country. There may be something in that; but there is much more in the fact that they are not simply brought up. Passing along the streets after ten o'clock at night, it is quite an ordinary thing to meet with children—and young ones too—who should have been in bed long since. How do we feed them? on plain, wholesome food, at regular hours? Not always; for, very often they are allowed to eat just what they fancy. Every school-teacher is quite familiar with this sort of thing:—"Dear Sir, Please excuse Tommy being late for school, and doing no home-lessons. We took him to a party last night, and he was up very late." (Tommy is about nine years old). Such instances might be multiplied to any extent, and they go to show that we do not train our little ones to live simply, to be satisfied with simple things—plain food, inexpensive amusements, and evenings spent at home; and if we do not do this, we are unreasonable to complain if they are restless and discontented. And what wonder is it that so many children are puny, weakly, and look old before they begin life? Of course the dealing with this matter involves trouble; for children should be taught, not told to learn, and it is unreasonable to turn them loose into an empty room and tell them to amuse themselves. Their parents must interest themselves in the matter; they should try to compensate for the lack of apparatus by cultivating the society of their children, and, as far as is possible, interesting themselves in their little concerns. A priest once listened to a long list of complaints from a mother on account of her children of both sexes. According to her they were wild, discontented, and several other things besides. At the end she, quite unconsciously, supplied the reason: "You see, Father, my husband and I are very fond of society; we go out nearly every evening,



and so, of course, we cannot look after them ourselves."

Again, we hear that: "Tommy will not eat this or that; and so we have to get something else." When we saw what it was that Tommy disliked so much, the inward reflection was: "And no wonder, poor child!" The same answer applies here. Food may be plain, but it can be nice, but to make it nice we must take trouble with it. And trouble is "too much trouble"; so we tempt poor Tommy with delicacies that would upset an ostrich, procured from elsewhere. No wonder that he "has a pain" next day, and has to be sent home from school!

Once more: why do the shops exhibit such "wonderful bargains" in little girls' frocks, hats, etc.? Simply because tradesmen know that foolish parents will buy them; and thus turn their girls, who should be dressed as simply as possible to allow freedom of action, into caricatures of their elders. The husbands of these same little girls will one day be surprised that the week's wages go fast; and that there is very little to show for them—outside dress. It will be delightful, no doubt, to see their wives following the fashion: whether it will be equally so to receive a summons on account of the non-payment of the water-rate is another question.

### Thrift

A few words on Thrift will not be out of place here. The training of our children is as much in view of the future as it is for the present. Therefore we should be thrifty in their regard, if only for the sake of the lesson conveyed. Thrift is not meanness, but only prudence in the use of our means. Well-to-do parents often do their children great wrong in the matter; with mistaken kindness, they give their children not only things that are necessary but also many that are not—merely because they can afford to do so. In most cases, these boys and girls will have to begin life not from the point where their parents left off, but from the point where they started. Everything they get they will have to



earn ; and if they are to succeed will have to deny themselves in much ; and here they are learning extravagant habits at home, without knowing it. Something has already been said on the question of almsgiving : and it is only referred to again because the first attempts at thrift are apt to be exercised in this direction—that is at the expense of others rather than at one's own. Nobody will ever be ruined by his charities ; so parents may rest quite easily about this matter and encourage their children to be liberal to others.

We read of many men “ who have made themselves,” who, when they were quite young, saved their pocket-money, penny by penny, to purchase books or tools. What our own children would say if this were expected of them one hardly dares to think. They expect such things—and many more, in the way of amusements—to be provided for them as a matter of course, and without any sort of effort on their own part ; and this is due to neglect of training in thriftiness, and simplicity in habits and wants.

### Correction

The Apostle St. James has laid down that “ in many things we all offend ” (James, iii, 2). Nowhere is this more true than among children. We have then to consider what should be done when our children do offend. We are bound to correct them, of course ; but how ? No general rule can be laid down, because no two children have exactly the same disposition.—Moreover, there arises the vexed question of corporal punishment. Some parents see in it the remedy for every fault of which childhood can be guilty ; and they perversely quote Solomon, to the effect that whoso spares the rod spoils the child. Others have a “ conscientious objection ” to anything of the sort. Probably both parties are wrong ; and the safe course lies, as usual, in the middle. If the first class had only carried out their duty to their children earlier in life, there might have been no necessity to call in “ Father Stick ” now. And if the latter would only exercise a little

more common-sense and a little less sentiment, we should hear less about the lad who is the despair of his parents because, in their own words, "we can do nothing with him."

It seems then that the best way to deal with a child's wrong-doing in its early stages, is by gentle remonstrance and reproof. Should these fail, there is no need as yet to proceed to extremities. There are plenty of ways in which an offence can be brought home and its repetition prevented—such as being deprived of this or that amusement, and so on. There used to be an old-fashioned method of correction by playing on a child's fears, locking it up in a dark room alone, etc. It may be hoped that such practices are long since extinct. It would be well if personal chastisement were reserved for more serious offences, such as wilful disobedience, falsehood, and the like.

Whatever is done, let it be just, done after due consideration, moderate in amount, let the reason for it be thoroughly understood, and, last, but not least, let the offence appear to be forgotten as soon as possible afterwards. In whatever way domestic discipline is preserved, let the method be continuous. The volcanic method is not recommended—by this is meant, patient endurance of irregularities for a time, followed by a storm to clear the air. It may clear the air, but it may also leave ruin behind it. The natural hurricane never does any damage that cannot be repaired; the domestic hurricane not only exceeds the necessities of the case, but sometimes produces effects which can never be undone.

### **The Secret of Family Life—Mutual Confidence**

As Almighty God established the family as the unit of Christian society, it is clear that He did not wish any further sub-division. Therefore the family should be one, i.e., united: and this can only come about by all its members having confidence in one another. Parents have already been urged to show some confidence in their children; they will make this much easier if they

lay themselves out to induce those children to have confidence in them. A parent is not Judge of a Court of First Instance, whose sole duty it is to investigate and pass sentence ; but the friend and adviser of each and every member of the family. Parents know how human they were, and are, themselves ; they should allow that their children are human too. Consequently, when anything unusual happens, the parents should be the first to hear of it—and from the children themselves ; because the latter are convinced they will get a sympathetic hearing. Advocates of a strict bringing-up might take careful note of this ; it will save them a great deal of anxiety. The boys get into trouble, and go to anyone rather than their father for help. A little advice might help the girls, but their mother only hears of the need of it from outside—afterwards. On the other hand parents of the opposite way of thinking rest quite easy in their conviction that, as long as their children tell them of nothing unusual, nothing unusual is happening : for, as they will tell you themselves : “ *Our* children have no secrets where we are concerned.” And this is as it should be.

### The Education of our Children

So far, nothing has been spoken of that cannot be done at home—or, at least, that cannot be begun there. We now come to that part of a child’s bringing-up which is usually confided to other hands than those of the parents themselves. This is called Education ; which, for the present purpose may be described as “ the training of the mind.” But it must not be supposed that when the services of the teacher are called in, the duties of the parents cease ; rather, additional obligations are placed upon them : for besides continuing all that has been insisted on before, there arises the further duty of co-operation in the work the teacher is doing, or trying to do. It becomes, therefore, of some moment for parents to understand the necessity for Education, and other matters connected therewith.

### The Training of the Mind

The mind is just as much a part of the individual as are the limbs or the organs of digestion ; and, just as these do not arrive at their full capacity for performing their functions all at once so the formation of a mind capable of reason and reflection is a work of time. Moreover, if any member of the body be kept in a state of permanent disuse, it becomes gradually incapable of the duty assigned to it by nature ; similarly, if the mind be allowed to remain in a state of stagnation, it also will at length be found to be incapable of development. In the earliest stages of life such things as are learned are arrived at by imitation, *e.g.*, speech ; a child born deaf is generally dumb. The next stage is that in which knowledge comes by means of the memory. The memory is most retentive in childhood, in some cases to such a degree that it is difficult to decide whether one is dealing with an extraordinarily clever child, or only with an ordinary child who has an extraordinary memory. But this condition does not continue permanently. Therefore it becomes of importance to develop the reasoning faculty, in order that, the principles or foundation of the matter in hand being grasped, all that follows from them may be arrived at by the process of reasoning. When a child can do this successfully, it has a trained mind—more or less—because it can think.

### Education prepares a Child for its Work in Life

Parents very often object not only to the number of subjects taught at schools, but also to the nature of the subjects themselves. A man has a grocery business, we will suppose ; and at school they insist on teaching his boy (say) Latin—of all subjects in the world ! not content with arithmetic, he is made to learn geometry, not to mention other things. The lad is intended, as the school authorities very well know, to join his father's business ; and here he is, learning all kinds of things which can never be of any use to him there. A familiar illustration will answer this objection—those small chairs on wheels by the aid of which babies learn to



walk. The baby probably reaches its chair on all fours, like an animal. It climbs up the chair, leans on it, and the thing slides away ; so it walks by the help of the chair, gradually gains its balance, becomes more adventurous, leaves the chair and goes alone. Now this chair will be of no possible use to the child in after-life, and yet it has done a necessary work—it has taught it to balance itself and walk. The same holds good of the educational process. In ten years' time, may be, it will not matter to the lad whether Cæsar conquered the Gauls, or the Gauls conquered Cæsar, or whether a square has four sides or forty ; but the overcoming of the difficulties incidental to the study of Latin and the subjects which, on the face of them, seem so useless, will have done its work. The struggle will have produced a mind that can think ; the educational chair can now be cast aside and the trained mind will have no difficulty in mastering subjects of more practical importance. One more example : Take two boys of the same age, both intended for the same kind of work—an office, we will suppose. One of them is set to learn only what he will have to do there : answering business letters and adding up interminable bills of parcels. The other gets a good general education and learns to use his mind. When they start work, the first can do all the routine work he has been taught, but nothing more ; the second probably knows red ink from black, and there his "business training" ends. But he has a trained mind, is orderly in his work, and can think ; in a very short time, he will have mastered all that it took the other one years of labour to acquire. And the employer will be quick to see the difference : in one case he has an educated youth, in the other a mere mechanical drudge. In the upshot, the one will make his way upwards : the other will remain where he began till he asks for a rise of salary, when he will probably lose his place.

### The Education of Girls

While it is of course desirable that girls should also be taught to use their minds in due degree it must not



be lost sight of that their object in life is—or ought to be—different from that of their brothers. The average boy will have to make his living and provide the means to keep a home : the average girl will have to look after the home itself. A certain amount of intellectual training is beneficial for her, but training in the management of her home, in all its details, is much more important. It is greatly to be deplored that much time which could be so much better employed should be frittered away in the pursuit of “accomplishments,” as they are called. Girls learn to dress, not merely usefully and becomingly but “elegantly and fashionably”; which means waste of time, not to mention money which could be much better applied. Time again is wasted in learning to play musical instruments—to the delight of their friends, who never reflect that the family of the accomplished performer lives uncomfortably, in an ill-kept house. Nor will it avail to urge that our girls are going to be teachers ; or that they will be so well provided for that they will have servants to do everything for them. In the first case : how can they teach others what they do not know themselves ? In the second : half the troubles of well-to-do people with their servants arise from the fact that “missus” has had no experience herself and therefore does not know what a servant can reasonably be expected to do. Even in a model household, a domestic crisis is bound to arise, sooner or later. The housemaid’s aged mother who has been “on a bed of sickness” for years, gets suddenly worse, and the maid must go to look after her; or Cook keeps her birthday “not wisely, but too well” : and these and similar emergencies detect the competent housekeeper, or the reverse. But in any case, no home can be comfortable without a good manager at its head. An ill-kept, untidy home will drive father away to seek quiet and comfort elsewhere, and send forth slovenly, unmanageable children. These and greater evils in the future may be prevented by timely attention to the training and education of our daughters in the present.

### A Duty to the Catholic Body

It is very often a matter of complaint among Catholics that, while they take their full share of the burdens of citizenship, by paying rates and taxes, they have little or nothing to say in the disposal of the funds so raised ; and that Catholic interests often suffer at the hands of public bodies, such as County Councils and the like. Moreover, we often notice, with perhaps a feeling akin to envy, that these same public bodies are largely composed of men who, as they boast, "have made themselves"—that is, have by their own energy and industry raised themselves from exceedingly humble beginnings to positions of influence. But should it not occur to us, on reflection, that the path to influence and success is just as open to ourselves as to our non-Catholic friends ? Not to us in our own persons may be, for we are most likely too old and have long since marked out our own manner of life which we can hardly change now ; but it is open to our children in the future. Whether that future is to be successful for themselves, and useful for their fellow-Catholics, largely depends upon whether the parents take an intelligent view of the education of their children, or the reverse. We do not mean that an attempt should be made to educate a race of Catholic County Councillors ; but it must be insisted on that it is the duty of every parent to procure for his child the best education at his command and, by so doing, fit him for such a position, should the opportunity occur.

There is less excuse than ever, in these days, for failure in this matter, as a good education is to be had almost for nothing. Even when parents are poor, the difficulty can usually be overcome in the case of a promising boy ; for, as all Catholics know, there exist in our midst educational bodies by whom the acquisition of wealth is entirely lost sight of, in their endeavours to train and educate Catholic children.

But it is to be feared that it is not lack of means that causes remissness in this matter, There seems to be no lack of funds for anything that interests us, nor even

for those numerous holidays and excursions that have come to be a necessary part of our existence. It is rather indifference, arising from the fact that we do not adequately appreciate one of our duties to Holy Church. While we leave—and very rightly—the direction of all purely spiritual matters in the hands of our bishops and pastors ; is it not rather unfair that we should cast upon the clergy the additional burden of the care of temporal matters, in which we might render most valuable assistance ? We read that in the “ dark ages,” as they are sometimes called, Catholics of all degrees were ever ready to fight for the rights of Holy Church—as the Crusades attest. In these gentler and more civilised days, she expects her sons to be ready and willing to help her with their brains and influence ; just as, of old, she called them to her assistance with sword and spear.

The laity of religious bodies outside the Catholic Church set us an excellent example in this respect—rather too much so, in fact : for not only do they take an unceasing interest in all that concerns their particular denomination and exert themselves to secure the education, influence and well-being of its members ; but, on occasions, they take in hand the instruction and direction of their clergy as well. Catholics, of course, would never attempt the latter ; but, in leaving it alone, they for the most part decline to concern themselves with the former. And thus we notice that the present-day battles of the Catholic body in this country have to be waged, almost entirely, by the clergy, aided by a few of the devoted laity who take a correct view of their duty towards their Church. Possibly many more are ready to do the same, in theory ; but they fail in practice.

But in any case help, to be of real use must be intelligent. But intelligent help only proceeds from an intelligent and cultivated mind ; and such a mind in the adult is only to be attained by the careful and intelligent education of the child. And this leads to the conclusion that we can only fulfil our duties to our Church by fulfilling our duties to our children.

### Education is an Investment of Capital

No one who undertakes a commercial affair, even in a small way, can ever hope to succeed unless he is prepared to sink a certain amount of capital in it. If he have not the necessary funds himself, he will make it his business to secure the assistance of somebody who has. Either plant, of a more or less extensive nature, has to be laid down, or stock of some sort must be laid in before any return can be expected, and even before operations can be begun. During the provision of either, or both, of these, our would-be merchant has to be content to see time passing and money going out but nothing coming in—knowing perfectly well that, on the perfection of the preliminaries the success of his venture will depend. In like manner a man who seriously destines his son for a professional career, such as a lawyer or doctor, is quite prepared to provide for the lad, for several years, a course of education and training which for some time will bring no return. Father and son both recognise that they are contending for a prize and that the best prizes are only awarded to the fittest. There is no “royal road” to success in life, any more than there is to virtue or sanctity; and a youth cannot be an ignoramus to-day and a successful man to-morrow.

How short-sighted, not to mention unfair to their children, are those parents who, having sent their boys to school, allow themselves to be diverted from the purpose for which they sent them there, on the first appearance of some specious opportunity of getting some trifling return in money. A boy whose education gave every promise of success is suddenly snatched away from school or college and “put to do something.” “Something” usually requires neither training nor skill, and the remuneration is, for the most part, insignificant. Nay, more: it is generally only temporary; and even if it be permanent, a year or so will show the boy and his parents that there is nothing in it and that it leads to nothing—a “blind alley” occupation. What is to happen then? The work, such as it is, can be



done by younger hands ; and no one takes any interest commercially in the uneducated. Therefore the boy must either remain idle, in which case he will most likely get into mischief, or he must take to such work as the uneducated can do. Unskilled labour is better than idleness, but it is for the most part hard and toilsome and will not commend itself to our young friend. Even if not too old, he will look askance at resuming his interrupted education. Apprenticeship to a trade means all sorts of disagreeable things—obedience, restraint, application—and therefore is not to be thought of. So he possibly tries his hand as a “master-tradesman,” in which occupation he quickly fails for want of knowledge and experience. There only remain those branches of industry which, although not directly contrary to God’s law, demoralise the individual and have a bad effect upon his neighbour. Such occupations, although they may have been undertaken through stress of circumstances by parents, must often cause twinges of conscience at their results ; and if parents really have the welfare of their children at heart, they will spare no pains to prevent them following in their footsteps.

All or any of these things may be prevented by timely recognition of the fact that Education is just as much an investment as the initial expenses of a business. This being recognised, all that is wanted is patience and co-operation in the work that is being done. Parents may rest assured that, if they give these, they are on the high road to the development of a generation of practical, useful Catholic men who, with the blessing of God, will be a credit to the family from which they came, and to the Church who owns them as her sons.

### **Life is a Serious Affair**

A noted philanthropist once stopped and asked a boy whom he met by the roadside : “What are you going to do, my lad ? Do you propose to fight for your King and country ? Do you think of revelling amid the shadowy creations of the artistic world ? Or do the



flowery fields of literature attract your youthful fancy?" "No, Sir; dad said as how he were going to set me to work in the 'tater field next week."

Experience goes to show that "dad" was not more short-sighted than some others of his kind—he could see as far as next week. And so we send Tommy to school, and congratulate ourselves that he is out of mischief for the present. The question of what Tommy is to do when his school-days come to an end comes upon us like a thunder-clap. But we recover ourselves sufficiently to reply with severity: "Tommy is much too young to think about that yet." Tommy, on his side, is only too willing to put off anything not connected with food or play. Years roll by; Tommy is fifteen, perhaps more, still doing nothing and doing it very well; but no decision has been arrived at. No sort of preparation can be undertaken by teachers in respect of a boy who is working for everything in general and nothing in particular; besides, some parents seem to take so little interest in the formation of Tommy's mind that it would puzzle them to say with any certainty whether he is better fitted for watch-making than for witchcraft.

But at the age of (say) thirteen, the bent of a boy's mind may surely be discovered and arrangements made to the end that, when he leaves school, he may be more or less prepared to commence his life's work. That life is a serious business and that we have only one life is too often lost sight of; and if, through our own short-sightedness, we wreck a boy's life in temporal affairs we thereby unsettle him and make his spiritual ruin more easy. A young man who "is ready to do anything that turns up," is more than likely to be unable to do anything that is worth doing—a misfortune that can be avoided by a little forthought.

### Pawns in the Game

On no point is the Catholic Church more emphatic than in her insistence that every Catholic child shall have a Catholic education. Her Bishops and priests

have struggled unceasingly for years to secure this. The Catholic body at large has made untold sacrifices for the same end by providing Catholic schools besides paying rates towards the up-keep of the Council schools. Training colleges and the Religious Orders which are concerned with education are straining every nerve—often under the most adverse circumstances—to provide efficient teachers, well versed in modern methods of education ; it remains therefore for parents to take advantage of what has been provided for their children. But it is to be deplored that there are parents—happily not in large numbers—who regard the Catholic school as a factor to be played off against the non-Catholic school. These imagine that in their anxiety to secure for the children the blessing of a Catholic education, priests and teachers can be made to yield on almost any point. And so, when any difference of opinion arises between the school authorities and the parent, the latter will threaten : “ Oh well : I can send my children to the Council School.” No doubt he thinks he is doing a very clever stroke of business in thus trying to “ squeeze ” the authorities : but in reality he is treating the soul of his own child as a pawn in the game, wherewith to blackmail his pastor. To send a Catholic child to a non-Catholic school, without sufficient reason, may easily become a grave sin, because (a) every Catholic child has a right to have a Catholic education : (b) sending them elsewhere may expose their Faith and Morals to danger : (c) in such schools their spiritual education is often neglected : (d) bad example is set to other parents : and (e) if such a course becomes common, Catholic schools cannot prosper as they should.

But, outside the question of Elementary Schools, it may be urged : “ Why may I not send my boy to a non-Catholic secondary school? For (1) I am assured his Faith will not be interfered with, as no religious instruction is given, or if there is, he will not be compelled to follow it : or if there is and he is compelled to be present, it will be simple Bible teaching, which can do no harm to anyone : (2) It must break down prejudice, this

mingling together on equal terms of Catholics and others :  
 (3) Does not the Holy See admit my contention, by permitting Catholics to go to Oxford and Cambridge ?  
 As to (1) : If there be no religious instruction at all, the school stands self-condemned as a place of education for Catholic children ; if there be, although the child may not be *compelled* to be present, he may be *induced* to attend ; and it requires more strength of mind than most children possess, to submit to be different from their companions. Also the instruction, if it be definite, must be hostile to the Catholic Church ; for was it not to protest against her claims that the denomination which supports a non-Catholic school took its rise ? Simple Bible-reading is useless, if it be simple, *i.e.*, without explanation—the scholars might read any other history-book with as much profit—and it passes the wit of man to give explanations without religious bias. (2) The breaking-down of prejudice, like lion-hunting, has two sides to it—you may catch the lion, but the lion may catch you. The Catholic child may break down the prejudices of his Protestant schoolmates, but the opposite may happen ; and the Catholic parent may find his child imbued with doubts as to the truths of Faith, or learning to look with contempt on Catholic practices of piety ; or worse still, looking with tolerance at those things which, though perhaps not gravely wrong in themselves, very often lead to sin. It seems to be altogether forgotten that there is such a thing as an “ atmosphere ” about every school ; by which is meant the predominant feeling of the school and the influence it exerts over each individual. Is it to be expected that a man should be in (say) the Army for a term of years, and at the end of it look at men and matters from the point of view of a sailor ? (3) The action of the Holy See affects young men who have already received a Catholic training at a Secondary School, not children ; and the permission is only conditional on due provision being made for spiritual needs.

Lastly : it is sometimes urged that non-Catholic schools are better equipped, and that the teaching

therein is better than in our own. This is an assertion which is nowhere proved and will take a great deal of proving. But suppose, for the sake of argument, that it is true in particular cases, what then? The answer can best be supplied by another question: Are such schools dangerous to Faith, or not? If they are, there arises the further question: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi, 26).

### The Relations between Parent and Teacher

At the risk of seeming tedious, it must be again insisted on that by sending their children to school parents do not free themselves from responsibility. They merely requisition the services of a skilled assistant who, according to the law of God, is invested with parental authority for the time being.

Parents may well examine themselves as to the confidence they show in the instructors of their children; and also how they assist them in their duties. In regard to the first, it must be taken for granted that they really have confidence in the school authorities; for if they have not, how can they reconcile it with their conscience to place their children under their care? This being so, it should be borne in mind that teachers are trained for this special work and are themselves under some authority; consequently, they know better than any amateur can, what should be taught and how to teach it. More than this: long experience of boys and girls has enabled them to perfect their methods of dealing with the various characters with which they are in daily and hourly contact. It will be more advantageous to a boy in the long run if, when placing him at school or college, the parent simply states what he intends to do with the lad; and thereafter leaves the process alone. Some parents make all sorts of conditions, *e.g.*, the boy must learn this and must not learn that; he must not play such a game; above all, on no account must he be punished, and so on. In this way they do their best—



or worst—to deprive their boy of the benefits of school ; by making him an exception to every rule, and probably a “muff” into the bargain. Others again destroy their children’s confidence in the school authorities by lending a ready ear to every sort of complaint, on the smallest provocation. Tommy came to school with all his edges rough, and bristling with corners and these are being rubbed down ; quite naturally Tommy does not enjoy the process, and as he cannot find fault with that, he complains of the way it is done. Of course, all complaints are not frivolous ; and when well-founded, are gladly redressed ; but the majority of them are and they would cease, were they not encouraged.

Next : how do we assist the work that is being done ? First of all, there is the school-work itself. Do we endeavour to secure regular and punctual attendance ? Some parents are careless enough about this, and others are worse for they take their children away for outings and holidays without any excuse. There is also a growing tendency to let children stay away from school at the time of examinations and inspections—this, of course, refers to day-schools. This just falls in with Tommy’s views—he has been idle, and is only too glad to have the fact suppressed. But—supposing Tommy to have worked well—is this fair to the teacher—who, after all, is only human and yearns to see some result for a term’s work,—that Tommy must now be marked “absent” ? Then how do parents co-operate in the matter of home-lessons, *i.e.*, the work given to be prepared for next day ? Numbers of parents, no doubt, are very strict in insisting that these shall be done and some even help ; but more do not care, and even hinder, by providing amusements or occupation which put work at home-lessons out of the question.

Finally : How do parents help the discipline of the school by inculcating habits of order, self-control, and obedience, at home ? If they do, they make the training-process continuous : if they do not, they undo, or connive at the undoing of, all that has been done during



the day. It may be noticed here, that those parents who are most remiss in securing the attendance of their children at school, and most peremptory in the laying-down of conditions concerning education, are always the loudest in their complaints that their children do not get to the top of their class, or succeed in their examinations. Similarly, parents who keep no sort of order at home ; who are most dogmatic in their demands that their children should be "coaxed" into doing anything, not told to do it ; and who neglect them, in order to go to theatres and the like ; are just the parents who are for ever bemoaning the bad manners and wilfulness of their boys and girls, and wonder : "Whatever are our children taught at school ? We really must take them away, if they don't improve."

### Conclusion

The good that men do lives after them ; and the same applies to their wives. Our children will not always be young ; and in after-life, though they may not remember all their parents have said, they will, in all probability, remember most of the things they saw them do. Therefore if we bring up our children carefully and religiously, we have given them the best possible start in life and may hope that, with the blessing of God, they will bring up their own children in the same way. History abounds with instances of parents who thus owed to their parents a debt which they could never repay. St. Augustine, at the age of thirty-three, was converted by the prayers and tears of his mother. One day, when the Blessed Curé of Ars was recalling the reminiscences of his childhood, his assistant-priest said to him : "You are very fortunate to have had such a good mother, and to have been taught by her to be so fond of prayer." "After God," replied he, "it was my mother's doing : she was so good. Virtue," added the Curé, "passes direct from the heart of a mother into those of her children, who do cheerfully what they see she does herself." On another occasion the Curé remarked that

“ a child ought not to be able to think of its mother without tears.”

If parents make their homes such as their children are glad to return to, they will have done much to shield them from the dangers outside. If they show themselves sympathetic with their boys and girls, they will gain their confidence ; their own good example will be imitated ; and much of what has been suggested herein will follow as a matter of course.

In a few years the parents will be old ; and their children will themselves be fathers and mothers. If they have brought up their children piously and well they will, quite possibly, have the satisfaction of seeing them prosper, even in this life. But even if they are not prosperous in a material sense, they may confidently hope that they are prosperous in one much better and higher ; *i.e.*, that they are good Christian men and women. And the thought that this has come about by the care and pains they bestowed on them when they were young, will do much to smooth their own passage from time to eternity.

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