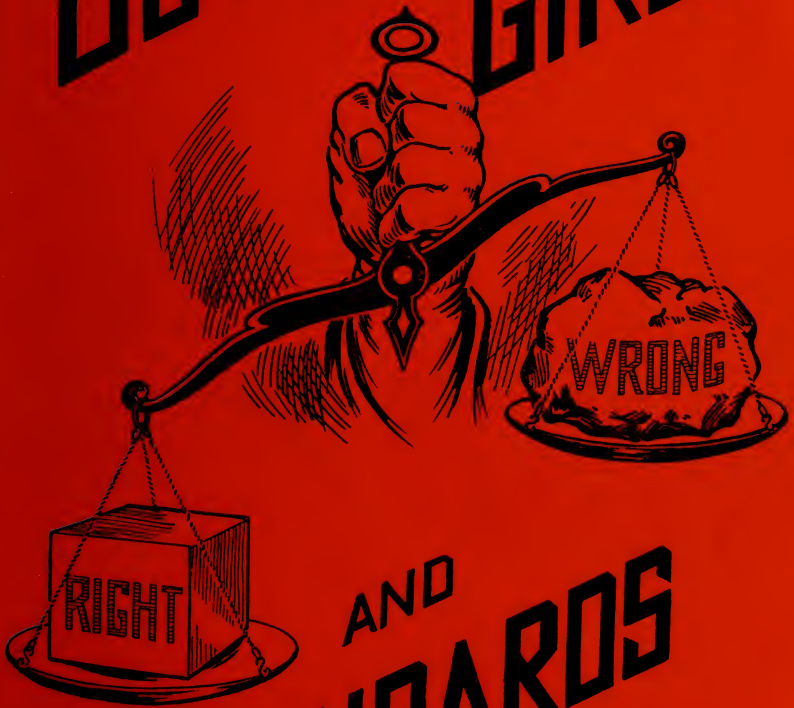


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BOYS

GIRLS



AND STANDARDS

ALICE
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BOYS, GIRLS AND STANDARDS

By ALICE DOUGLAS KELLY

I

YOUTH SPEAKS

ONE hesitates to mention the words "younger generation." Too much has been said about them already. But it has all been said by people not of their number. What they say about themselves seems to me interesting. They, too, have been through a war, a war perhaps a little against their elders, a good deal against themselves, but mainly against rootless tradition and above all against boredom.

As I lived and worked among younger people for a long time I was able to watch them. It was more difficult to listen to them, for half unconsciously, they do not speak their own language in the hearing of those who may be unsympathetic. But finally my curiosity as to where they were going, what they were doing, why they were doing it and particularly what they thought about it all, overcame me, and I began to ask questions. I made myself a nuisance to every one I knew between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three; but they bore with me patiently enough and once they were assured that I really wanted to know their point of view, answered me very fully.

I have heard women of sixty speak with bitterness of the too great severity of their parents; I have listened by the hour, it seems to me, to women between twenty-five and forty telling the mistakes their parents made in training them. I heard nothing of this from the generation commonly supposed to be "rude and ungrateful and heart-

less." On the contrary, in a great many cases they spoke of their parents' problems with more sympathy and understanding than some of the same parents had shown in speaking to me of their children.

One girl of seventeen summed up fairly well the attitude of most of them. She was so small as to seem a mere child and she was superficially "hard" beyond belief. With an accent and phraseology she certainly had not learned in her mother's living room, she said: "Sure we run around a lot; sure we drink and smoke too much, and don't get so much fun out of it either. But why the devil should we pass the buck to our parents? We're not dumb; we know our way around. It's up to us."

This conversation led me to ask the rest of the young people with whom I discussed the subject, if they were not finding either happiness or gaiety, as they almost without exception, assured me they were not; to what they ascribed their failure, and why, if they had failed, they went on living as they did, in a way to produce endless friction at home, an enormous amount of adverse criticism everywhere, and a great deal of worry on the part of those who cared most for them, as regards both their health and their morals.

PSYCHOLOGY AS AN ALIBI

I was, of course, given many different reasons. I listened to a great many timeworn platitudes. The glib theory that "as long as one harms only one's self one may do as one pleases" was repeatedly brought forth. Pathetic, half-digested psychological jargon was earnestly produced for my benefit; morals a matter of fear; standards of conduct mainly inhibitions or perhaps frustrations; being

afraid of life far worse than too much experimenting; these profundities were all offered to my senile mind as new discoveries. In night clubs so dull as to make one think longingly of almost any other form of recreation, where the food was uneatable and the drinks should have been undrinkable, boys and girls quoted to me without a flicker of amusement: "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die."

I was beginning to think that all the problems of our children, which are of such soul-stirring importance to parents, were, after all, not very fundamental. I thought I was seeing only the manifestations of restlessness and discontent with life's monotony, founded in large part upon youth's superabundant vitality, and which, sooner or later, would be directed into the normal channels of work and procreation. Then I became aware that through all the welter of speciousness there emerged one almost invariable cry; the expression of a need so fundamental and definite, and so little what I expected that I felt that here at last was something that anxious and bewildered parents should know. In substance what these young people said was this: We need a more definite rule of life. A standard which lies outside ourselves—which is above and beyond ourselves—by which we can live.

SEEKING A COMPASS

They groped blindly for a staff to help them on their way; for a reliable map of the great unknown wastes, danger-infested, through which the years must force them. And the burden of their cry was that they had asked for bread and the most generous and the most loving of their parents had, all unwittingly given them stones.

It was not phrased as concisely as this of course. One said: "Older people haven't any answer for us. They can't tell us why anything is wrong. A lot of them don't believe in anything themselves any more than we do. But they're what we call 'good' because they got the habit when they were young, or because they're afraid of what people will think, or because they haven't time to do anything else. That's not enough for us."

Another: "If this is the only life we have and we keep out of jail why shouldn't we enjoy it in our own way? My people haven't any answer to that; they don't believe in the existence of a soul any more than I do."

And still another: "My family are very religious in a way. But they believe *in young people choosing for themselves*, but they didn't give me anything to choose from."

One slim blonde child of nineteen whose apparently exclusive preoccupation with the gratification of the five senses, had led me erroneously to believe that she was incapable of thought, said to me: "When I have daughters, they're going to have some rule of life, if I have to go back to the time of the Puritans."

GRANDFATHERS WERE LUCKY

The young man who two years after college was still aimlessly drifting around, still playing at life as much as he had been five years before and not because of the depression, since his father had offered him a job said: "Why work, why struggle, why be noble when all you get at the end is a nice headstone? My grandfather was a lucky guy—he honestly believed he'd have a chance to make up for mistakes in another world after he got through with this one. He worked *for* something. But as for me, my parents

broke away from all that; they didn't take any chances on a future life, believe me. They've taken all they can out of this one; they don't even bother to keep promises. They've been divorced twice. It doesn't matter much I suppose, but if I had a kid, I'd darn well see that he learned to believe that he was at least a couple of steps above a horse or a cow."

This was the recurring motif of all their answers. They said it over and over again, and it was the most callous, the most apparently lost among them who said it the most fervently.

II

THE TREND OF THE TIMES

Openmindedness has become almost as much a cult at the present day as godliness was in another age; but it seems that the mind of the modern parent must have been too wide open; must have admitted some things which have betrayed their children, since, in their emancipation, these children are asking for a restriction more profound than any superficial restraint which could be devised by the average loving father and mother.

If an instructor taught a class the use of any given mechanism or the application of any principle, without explaining to that class the reasons underlying the rules expounded, he would be considered an exceedingly bad teacher. A mother who handed her child knives, firearms or matches without explaining their uses and making clear the dangers connected with them, would be criminally negligent. The physician who did not instruct an ignorant patient in a few of the elementary rules of hygiene or warn him of the results of neglect, would not be considered the best or most intelligent type of doctor. Yet mothers and fathers virtually say to their children: "Here is the world, and here is life. Do what you can about it. We can tell you our own experience; we can warn you that some things are not 'nice,' that other things are 'wicked,' that still others will make you ill—but we can give you no good and sufficient reasons why you should be 'nice' nor why you should preserve your health, other than those fallible ones of social expediency. We have no rule of life to give you. We believe we have brought you into a world which has not much to offer you, and since we have emancipated our-

selves from the 'old beliefs' we cannot hold out to you any hope of anything after this existence—so you must do the best you can. We can only scold or weep or agonize or punish, when you get lost in the fog into which we ourselves have sent you."

So say the broad-minded, the enlightened, the unsuperstitious and the intelligent parents.

ENLIGHTENED PARENTS

They go further. The savage tribes blame jealous and very earthly gods and forces for all their troubles; they use as cure-alls and preventatives of misfortune amulets, charms and extreme and complicated endurance tests and ceremonies. So do "enlightened" parents. They blame the war, the depression, prohibition, automobiles, the present (past and future) fashions in clothing, the movies, books, magazines—anything and everything, for their children's misdemeanors. Equally they are sure that prohibition or repeal or violent home restrictions or country life or more money or less money will immediately reform their erring sons and daughters. As well blame thunderstorms for a child's tantrums or the San Francisco earthquake for every youthful misdemeanor in the West during the following decade. It would be as sensible to say that by giving a girl all the clothes she wanted or none at all that we would cure her vanity or teach her modesty—or by giving a boy all the money he asked for or keeping him without a penny we would make him honest.

The depression has not been easy on youth. But in the boom times preceding it, juvenile delinquency was on the increase. And people—parents blamed prosperity. Who has not heard: "Kids have too much nowadays. They are

spoiled. If they had to go without things it would take some of the nonsense out of them." And who is not now hearing: "Well, you cannot blame the kids—no jobs, no money for recreation, for amusements. They are in a tough spot!"

Except for a possible, but not certain, improvement in the cheaper grades of liquor, repeal and prohibition will be exactly the same to the young person who does not see any reason for self-control and self-direction.

I am not saying that repeal is not best for the country. I am not saying that prohibition was not a silly attempt at legislative morality. I certainly do not say that wars, famines, panics, pestilences and wrong physical environment cannot and do not handicap youth and sometimes drive it into misconduct or lack of ambition. I do not say that allowances should not be made for youth growing up in a jobless age, or a war or debt stricken country or during a false prosperity which makes the luxuries of life come too soon and too easily to hand.

No intelligent or thoughtful person could minimize the difficulties of one kind or another with which each rising generation has to contend. And that is precisely the point which I am trying to make. Life cannot be made perfect for our children. If we are so fortunate as to have peace, rich harvests and financial security for them there will inevitably arise other situations, other emergencies which they must face and conquer. And parents must train their children so that they will be able to cope with the problems and difficulties of their lives as they present themselves. If an explorer's compass is in order, he does not question the direction it shows him. We must find an accurate compass for our children's guidance.

EXAMPLE NOT ENOUGH

Parents will say: Example is enough. Example is important, but to say that it is enough is absurd. It is not always even good. By that I mean that the needs of youth and age are different. Take a simple example: I never run except in a case of emergency. If my children followed my example, they would always walk. But children need to run. Therefore what I have to teach them is, where and when to run and where and when not to. I have to give them intelligent reasons for this, not just say "I never run."

If I never take a drink because I do not want a drink, how will it help my twenty year old son not to have a craving for alcohol? I am quite literally giving him an excellent example, but it is an entirely unconstructive one. On the other hand if he knows that I love sweets, but because they are not good for me I eat them infrequently, I am giving him a real example of self-denial and control. But—and here is the point on which parents are ostrich like, their mental heads buried in the vast sands of specious alibis—how am I even then going to persuade my son that it matters whether he or I do the things which are physically hurtful to him, and to me?

Suppose he says: "Well, it's my body. If I want to hurt it, it's my business."

I can if I am emancipated from dogma reply: "But you may shorten your life; you will make trouble for those who have to care for you."

And suppose he replies: "I have money enough to hire nurses and I don't find life so hot anyway."

What do I say then?

WHAT IS STRENGTH?

Non-Catholic parents have said to me: "It is so weak to bow to a vague unseen power. It lessens your authority to let your God decide about your children for you."

On that assumption the weak answer to the boy who is drinking too heavily, would be: "My son. Our bodies are not our own. You were given me as a sacred charge, and your body and mine are the temples which house God's spirit. God has enjoined us that we are responsible for scandalizing others and leading others into sin. We are guardians only—merely trustees. We must bring our bodies into submission that our souls shall be strong."

The strong answer would be: "Well, I do not know, son. I suppose there is no real reason why you should not be drunk all the time, except that you may have pains and sickness and some nice people will not know you. But if you really want to, I cannot stop you, only I wish you would not."

This is ludicrous but it is not exaggerated.

Another "alibi" that parents bring forward to justify their spiritual freedom is that "it is cowardly to accept the dicta of the Church and the advice and directions of her priests." "Be master of your own destiny," they cry. "Be captains of your mind and intellect."

CATHOLICS MASTERS OF THEMSELVES

Yet it is not the Catholics I have known who have feared death, and the middle and last years of life. It is not the Catholic young people who have said to me: "I am afraid to have a child—you lose so much time—women lose

their lives and their figures having babies—supposing I should not have money enough for nurses—for luxuries. Supposing I could not provide what my neighbors give their children.”

It is not the staunch practising Catholic children who have said to me: “I don’t particularly want to drink, to be adulterous, to laugh at unclean stories—but people laugh—the boys won’t take you out. I don’t want to be different.”

And if it is true that fear plays some part in the virtue of a practising Catholic, suppose that a Catholic girl or boy does hesitate to go to the confessional with a tale of mortal sin, suppose he does fear to face the sorrowful eyes of his God with a soul stained black, surely that is a nobler fear, a finer fear, a more constructive fear than the cringing before responsibility, and pain and age and public opinion and death, which motivates so many agnostics.

Parents cannot alibi much longer. They must face facts. Their children are asking them for help. They dare not refuse it and then complain of the results of that refusal. They must look for an answer and they will not find it in their own open minds.

III

YOUTH IS SINCERE

These children are sincere in their desire for a rule above their own devising to which they can hold. If my child asks for candy, I may question his hunger; if he begs for dry bread, I must find him food. A rule of life is dry fodder for anyone accustomed to the sweets of continual self-indulgence. Asking for it indicates a real hunger, a hunger great enough to amount to malnutrition. And they are asking for it. I cannot too greatly emphasize that fact. Cannot too often repeat it.

I say again. It is not true that youth does not want guidance. It fears to be without it more than its pride will permit it to admit to older people. It distrusts its own judgment, its ability to walk alone. An adolescent is as afraid of strange life paths as a child separated in a crowd from its mother would fear the strange streets through which it must run alone.

But by guidance I do not mean restriction only. I do not mean those empty rules alone which suit our convenience or the social expediency of our particular locality. Young people are quick enough to run with the herd. Too quick to conform to what their fellows socially demand of them. By their contemporaries they can be laughed out of virtue and teased into weakness.

They are not asking for a book on etiquette. They are not asking for an expression of our personal likes and dislikes. What they are asking for and what they must have, is a guidance which is logical, which is superior in its essence to the experiments which the adults themselves are making. They want a rule which they can respect and which holds out to them a promise for the future, of a hap-

piness more enduring and more sound, than any of the pleasures they are now seeking.

NO PROMISE IN HUMAN RULE

There is no finite, human rule which contains all these elements. What, if we deny God and Immortality, can we give children which is superior to our own experience? And of that experience how much shows failure, how much the success of our own ideas and attempts at living? Why should they respect our opinion more than that of the next older person whom they admire or like? Suppose I tell my children that I do not approve of smoking; that I have found it harmful to physical well-being and subversive of morals. And suppose that my next door neighbor, an excellent and virtuous elderly woman says that she on the other hand thinks smoking a charming social custom, productive of no evil and definitely of a certain benefit to mankind. My children may obey me, but whom are they to believe?

Neither of us necessarily. Or rather the one who can say, and prove it to them. "Smoking can be a pleasant social custom, or it can be a vice, depending on the state of your health and the demands on your pocketbook. It is your duty to see that it does not become a vice, because you are responsible to a higher power for your actions."

How can any human being promise happiness on their own responsibility to another human being? The idea is absurd.

Can we truthfully say to young people: "If you remain chaste, you will find greater happiness just in being chaste than you would be with any loved one you may find"? Obviously not. Virtue in itself may be a reward

to some people, to others not. We cannot promise that it will be.

VIRTUE'S REWARD UNCERTAIN

Can any thinking person say: "Be good, and in this life you will be happy"? All young people have seen or heard of pure women dying in agony of cancer. They have known good husbands and fathers snatched untimely from their family in cruel accidents. They have seen the wicked prosper and the good suffer. Hard workingmen have had the fruits of their labors swept away by dishonest men who lived on the fat of the land. Self-sacrificing decent women have lived in poverty and wretchedness, while Magdalenes rejoiced in luxury and splendor.

Life on earth has much that is beautiful, but it has much that is ugly and cruel and hard. To the person who honestly believes that he has only one life to live, and that a short one, how shall he find loveliness in sacrifice and bliss in self-denial? Why indeed should he? We do not ask a dog to fast nor expect a bird to stop singing during Lent.

In other words we cannot guarantee to these young people anything above and beyond our own and their limitations, unless we go to something greater and surer than we can ever be.

Parents, when regarded as the instruments of God, are wonderful beings; they have a wonderful responsibility and are the instruments of the most holy of all miracles, the carrying on of life and of destiny.

When they try to substitute for God they are both stupid and presumptuous. Worse than that, they become ineffectual. They attempt something they cannot hope to do. They make a tacit promise they dare not hope to fulfill.

COMMANDMENTS STILL SOUND

The Ten Commandments today are just as sound as they were in the time of Moses. One may say that there are people who live according to the Mosaic precepts without believing in any official dogma; that there are plenty of excellent men and women who without subscribing to any creed still keep holy the Sabbath day, shrink from murder and adultery and would not under any circumstances bear false witness against their neighbor.

That is quite true. There are, indeed such people, and thank God for them, since we have not all the gift of Faith, nor do we all know where and how to seek it. We adults may and do admire these human beings, who, without hope of reward or dread of punishment give their natural virtues free rein and seek to control their frailties.

But can they satisfy their children? Most certainly not. Listen to a few of the sons and daughters of just such people:

"Mother's an angel but she doesn't want to go out and shoot up the town. She was brought up to believe that it wasn't nice to do this, that, or the other thing."

"Dad hates to have me do anything on Sunday. Why? How do I know? He doesn't know either. Just says they didn't do those things when he was a boy."

"Oh! mother's father was a Puritan and she still thinks the devil will get her if she doesn't look out. But that didn't keep her from leaving father and from running with that fast crowd."

These are actual quotations. What they say is that some parents are listening to echoes of a Faith they have almost forgotten, and of which in most part they have retained only a superstitious fear. They have no more an-

swer for their children than have the broad-minded ones or the agnostics or those who believe in a short life and a *merry* one.

There are people also who consider themselves to have proved that good behavior, by accepted standards, is in the long run more profitable for the intelligent man or woman than a life of self-indulgence. On purely materialistic standards they say, goodness pays. It does for some people. Abstemious women as a whole, keep their youth and their beauty longer than gluttons do. A brilliant man who has a reputation for scrupulous honesty commands more business than a professional whose business methods are known to be shady. People will go back for reliable merchandise. They will not return for inferior brands. Chastity minimizes the dangers of disease and a certain amount of hard work and of childbearing is an insurance against difficulty and illness at the difficult period of a woman's life.

CAPACITY DIFFERS

On the other hand we cannot all be intelligent. Few of us are brilliant. We cannot be sure that our children are going to be of the intellectual heavyweights of the world. Suppose then that our son finds greater reward in working under a crook than honestly for himself or that our daughter finds efficiency and system so difficult that to bear children or to try to be a good wife is a real effort for her. Are we then to say to them: "Decent living is denied to you. Go and do the best you can *as you can*"?

What else can we say if we cannot tell them—"It is your duty to make the most of your gifts, however poor they may be. You must live the good life even if here on earth it does not bring you, personally, rich returns,

because after this life you will be rewarded a thousandfold. And even here you will be given strength according to your needs.”

There is also a school of thought in parents which pushes the *Mens sana in corpore sano* (a sound mind in a sound body) to absurd lengths. They have snatched, with cries of relief at the harvest of years of endeavor among medical men and psychiatrists. They say if young people, or old people for that matter, are healthy, they will be good. It is all a matter of metabolism, correct nutrition or the violet ray.

No one can overestimate the good medicine and psychology have done in helping to solve conduct problems. Anyone who has had even a head cold knows what illness can do to the disposition and the viewpoint. Energy is sapped and ambition nullified by various types of chronic bad health and the handicap of poor physical development has made self-control difficult for many and achievement to their capacity impossible to not a few.

ANOTHER ALIBI GONE

Yet, though health should be considered and as we Catholics know, it is our sacred duty to consider and preserve it, though mental and nervous states have their effect upon human behavior and should be directed, controlled or cured as the need is, still health, mental and physical, is only one factor in the direction of human lives. All cripples are not criminals. All people who, from the faulty functioning of their glands, are overweight or underweight are not moral degenerates or professional failures. Midgets lead useful and decent lives. Invalids have been among the Saints. Statesmen and geniuses and great philanthropists

have come from the slums, as well as any number of solid citizens.

The removal of my child's tonsils probably will make her less irritable. It will not teach her what privileges to allow the men who take her out. My son's impacted teeth and nearsightedness can and probably have affected his standing at school. But neither dentist nor oculist can make him automatically aware that it is a sin to endanger his life and the lives of others by speeding in his car along the highroad.

It is another alibi which does not hold up. An alibi which is destroyed by the testimony of the Saints and by Christ Himself. Christ cured the sick, He forgave them their sins. He did not say: "You have never committed a sin because you were sick." Still less did He say: "Now because you are cured you will always be perfect." He gave them health but He never failed to add to health an unchanging and inflexible rule of life.

LOOK BEYOND THE STARS

And so once more, with tedious repetition we come back to the fact that not upon earth can parents find the rule of life their children want.

Can they find it at all, they ask? Certainly they can. It is not because there is no sound and supernatural rule of life to be followed that parents have denied it to their children. It is, rather because they have refused to look for one, or, that having heard the claim of the Church that she holds such a rule within herself, have refused to investigate her claim. Religion is the only answer to the question: "Why should we be good?" and "What is goodness?"

IV

THERE IS NO REASON TO BE GOOD!

There is in the world, fortunately, a great deal of natural goodness. Decent people are clean and modest and discreet, as a matter of course. But youth is careless and youth is spendthrift and it is difficult to show logical cause why a young girl who does not intend to marry, who, perhaps, has no family to worry about her and who has sufficient means with which to get along, should not at times abuse her health, unless she believes in the supernatural dictum that her body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, or in the Divine promises of reward and punishment for good and evil conduct.

Everyone cannot be naturally delicate and fine and well-bred and if one has not these qualities and at the same time believes that one's body has been created merely by accident as the result of a chance combination of chemical elements, there seems small reason to be chaste.

Why should a woman who is frail, or in poor financial circumstances, bear a child if she considers it as she would a puppy or a kitten, and not as a soul sent here by God to fill an essential place in His Divine Plan? Equally, if there is no such thing as a soul, the destroying of life before it enters the world, cannot be murder.

NATURAL VIRTUES NOT ENOUGH

The natural virtues, such as kindliness, consideration, unselfishness, good nature and charity are mere unrewarded stupidity unless we believe that: "Do unto others as you would that they do unto you," is divinely inspired.

Consider the questions children ask of their parents. I am reasonably sure that my children love me. I have no

reason, certainly they have never given me any, to suppose that they do not respect me. But the old unquestioning submission to parents, is, rightly or wrongly, a thing of the past.

I may take it for granted that my children will tacitly ask me: "Why, if you cannot give us this, that, or the other thing, did you bring us into the world at all? We didn't ask to be born. Perhaps we should not have chosen your home or you if we had been allowed to choose."

THE CHILDREN QUESTION US

Harsh words, but logical enough if I have brought up the children on a strictly worldly basis. Now what two answers have I? I can be very, very broad-minded and say: "Well children, I knew we did not have much money and that you would have to go without things. I knew life would be a struggle for you. I knew you could not be happy a lot of the time, but I wanted babies. I saw that women are better off physically and mentally if they have a child or two. I was afraid of being lonely when I was older and I saw what fun other women had with cute little boys and girls, so I had a family."

I can say: "I wanted to see myself, my personality, my family, or the family name carried on. I thought if I had babies your aunt or your grandparents would leave us more money."

In short I can say that for perfectly selfish motives, and with complete freedom of choice I brought new entities into a world which I personally had not found a very happy one.

And in the face of those answers can I effectively tell my child that they must be content with their lots; more,

that they must be good and obedient and self-sacrificing and grateful for life? I think not. I hope my children will never be stupid enough to be content with such speciousness.

AND WE ANSWER

The only chance I have to make my children want to be good is to be able to answer with conviction: "I did not deliberately bring you into this world of suffering and trouble. By that I mean that I did not marry and have a family just to satisfy my own maternal longings, or my ego or to carry on a name or a tradition. I believed that marriage was instituted primarily for the purpose of procreation. I believed, further, that God sent you to me, to a world which He tells us may be made like the Kingdom of Heaven. You have a part in His plan to make it so. It would be, I am sincerely convinced, a most awful presumption on my part, to take the responsibility of denying you the Destiny which God has planned for you. I *must* help you to do what He wants and you *must* obey Him. You need only be subject to me or to the law insofar as we interpret His wishes."

Children say: "We were kind and we met with ingratitude. We were considerate and were unjustly dealt with, unselfish and others less worthy won the prizes we deserved." They tell us truthfully that where they were charitable they met with contumely and where they were virtuous they were ostracized and left lonely.

What shall we say? "Even so, it is not nice to do otherwise. Because it is inconvenient to me to have you talked about or unsuccessful you must conform to the ordinary rules of community life. You may be jailed, you may not

make a successful marriage, you may get ill if you do so and so."

And if they reply as many have and as many will again: "I don't care. I want to do as I choose." What then?

We can say: "You make me unhappy. You worry me." We can say: "After all I have done for you, you should do this much for me."

But young people already think that parents worry from habit and unnecessarily. They know as we know that it is no more than our duty to provide for them and to supply them with a comfortable home and education.

We know and they know that the laws of the country would force us to do this. Why then should they be grateful?

They should not. But they should be grateful to God for the gift of life, for the opportunity of carrying out His Divine Plan, and for parents to protect and love and guide them. That is what we parents must prove to ourselves so that we can pass it on.

PARENTS ARE GUIDES

And the important thing is the duty of parents to guide the children. Neither the broad-minded, nor the dogmatically emancipated, nor the agnostics deny that. It is a fact so generally accepted that that responsibility is used as an excuse not to have children; it is recognized by law-makers and it is urged by all civilized races and by most of the uncivilized ones.

If the children of a wrong environment are excused their faults, the parents who from sheer inertia or lack of conscientiousness supply that environment cannot be held blameless. They are universally condemned.

This is as true in the spiritual world as it is upon the physical plane. If we adult human beings marry and are blessed with children it is our duty to train these children to be good and efficient citizens. No one has ever denied it. But, we are human. We have faults. Our judgment is easily clouded, our mental attitudes warped. We have our own problems, our own emotional difficulties which tend to make us biased in our decisions. We cannot therefore honestly say to our children: "Take my advice and you will never make mistakes." And once we admit that our children can logically retort: "Well, when can we trust your ideas? How shall we know when you are right and when wrong?"

They cannot ever know that we are right except as our experience happens to tally with their own, as long as we rely only upon our own fallible and limited judgment. We have to have a code which is greater than anything we ourselves could possibly formulate. We have to find a rule which has stood the test, not of our own short and faulty lives, but of centuries. A rule which has lived through history, which has been unaltered by changing times, which applies equally and with equal efficiency to all races, classes and types of people. A rule which is effective with brilliant people and with stupid people, with individuals and with groups. Such a rule cannot be finite. It cannot have limits. It must partake of the eternal. It must last at least while the world shall last.

What merely human mind can create, can conceive, can even encompass such a rule? No human mind ever did. Let deny it who will, if a person condemns the divine rule of life, if a parent says, "I do not need the authority you suggest," let him prove that he has a better one.

THERE ARE NO SUBSTITUTES

So far parents have found nothing to substitute in effectiveness for the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount, the infallible dicta of the Church. Pretend as they please, that they have, their own children are a witness against them.

Parents have not the strength to keep their children on that straight path their better judgment tells them is all essential for mental, moral and physical safety. No one wishes a child to be an automaton, a robot, obeying anyone in authority without thought and without reason.

The parent who has his children's best interests at heart wants the children to be normally mature, self-reliant and sensible. Yet these very qualities allied to the inexperience of youth can become the most terrible of pitfalls. They must have a balance. Hysterical fears on the parents' part or frenzied pleadings, commands that they are powerless to enforce, are all worse than useless.

And even if they were not. Suppose we can train our children to obey slavishly our lightest commands. Suppose we can make them parrot-fashion recite: "Mother knows best," "Father must be right," on every occasion. Suppose even that they love us so much, they do not want to hurt us; that they will yield to any whim or caprice of ours rather than have us worried or upset. What then?

CHILDREN MUST GROW UP

Are we to keep them at home by our side and under our wing until they are old and gray? Must they not go out from home? Will they not have to work, to see the world, to love, to marry, to have children of their own? Our in-

fluence will not be so strong upon them then. They will meet other people more intelligent, more charming than we are, to refute what we have claimed and taught. Our precepts will soon be forgotten in the light of new interests, new friends, and they will only too readily assume that "what mother and dad don't know can't hurt them."

It may be said that young people lose their religion as easily. That "out of sight, out of mind" applies to the Church as well as to parents. This may be true of those sects whose function is more largely social than spiritual, as is frequently the case in rural communities, and those whose creed is flexible. But it is not true of the Catholic Church.

It is true that people have left the Church. It is equally true that many Catholic young people are not as devout as they might be. But it is also true that the Church exercises a profound and permanent influence upon the minds of her adherents. She may be temporarily out of mind, but she cannot be long out of sight, since there is never an hour of the twenty-four when Mass is not being said somewhere in the world. And her teachings are hard to disregard once one is thoroughly convinced of their truth, because they do not depend upon mood, upon health, upon circumstances, but are rigid and unchanging and not to be set aside for the frailties of human nature.

PARENTS SHOULD INVESTIGATE

This is just the law that parents should investigate for they can give it to their children as a permanent guide. For parents not only have to give up their children to life and to the world. Parents do die. If they have not left their children a torch of Faith with which to lighten their

darkness, of what avail are worldly goods? Of what use is wealth if it is only used for self-indulgence? Of what good health, if one has no moral obligation to conserve it?

After our deaths our children will soon forget what worried us, what our experiences were, what small wisdom we accumulated, what we asked of them and why. Christ has been dead for over two thousand years; Moses for a good deal longer than that. But their teachings, the revelations made to them by God the Father have lasted vitally, efficiently and unchanged until the present day.

We cannot expect our children to live well if we guide them only within the limitations of our finite intellect. In other words, we cannot expect them to live as Immortals if we rob them of belief in Immortality. And, when parents rob their children, they rob themselves, because they cannot be omniscient, omnipotent or ubiquitous, and if they can depend for their children's safety only upon the external restraints imposed within their own limitations, they have, indeed, something to worry about.

V

THERE IS A WAR BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

I seem to have drawn an unlovely conflict between parents and children instead of the beautiful relationship stressed by poets and undoubtedly intended by Divine Providence. This conflict does exist and to a greater extent than is perhaps generally realized. Parents want children to be well, happy and good, by which they generally mean socially minded and successful.

Children want to feel well, to be happy and to be socially successful. So far the agreement is perfect. It is when we come to the means of achieving these ends that we find trouble. Parents have for the most part been disciplined by life and by their fellow men to a point where they choose safe and sane paths in which to wander. As we grow older our sense of adventure lessens, our emotions are calmer and our desires more restricted. How can we be sure that our advice to our children is not in part inspired by this decrease in force which few of us escape? How can we persuade our children that our loving exhortations, our frenzied desire to protect them are not prompted by "old fogyism" and a middle-aged lack of understanding?

LIFE PASSES US

Most parents are out of touch with the times. Many of us really do not know what is correct and what is bad form during a given year. Work, the rearing of a family and necessary economy have kept many of us away from the social world for many years. Also we do not actually

know what our children are doing at all for many hours each day.

Does some one say, "What carelessness"?

Review the average day in a child's life. Forty minutes is spent on the way to and from school. With whom, or of what do they talk? Nine to three is spent in school. Supposing even that the school, be it parochial, public or private is ideally located, perfectly staffed and super-excellent in every way. Still the instructors cannot listen to every scrap of conversation which goes on within its walls or on its playground. They cannot follow every child home and check completely on each one's environment all of the time.

After school where are the children? Outdoors, comes the indignant answer. Playing football or baseball or dolls or going to the store on errands and I know every soul they meet.

Do you? Do you for one minute suppose that these children who call for yours, who come in with polite, "Good mornings," who eat cookies with your children and play with them, talk freely when you are present? Do you know all the stray remarks your neighbors, the store-keeper, the other customers in the store let fall which may influence your sons and daughters?

How about the radio, newspapers, books, the movies? The cry arises—but we supervise our children's activities. We do not allow indiscriminate reading, frequent movie-going, uncontrolled choice of radio programs. They do not read the papers at all. Still, we cannot keep our children blind and deaf and dumb and on a desert island. They can learn about murder from the story of Cain and Abel; about embezzlement from David Copperfield. And

as far as newspapers are concerned, as I write, a famous case of kidnaping is being tried in our courts. Do you think my children have not heard about this case? Do you think they have no opinions about it? Nonsense! Discussion of it is everywhere and I could not stop their thinking if I wanted to.

I am not trying to postulate a world of vileness where every human being is alert to scandalize little children, and where the press and publishers and producers are in league to do them harm. On the contrary I believe that we parents owe much to all organs of education and amusement.

I believe that they do infinitely more good than harm and I think that most people go out of their way to protect children from evil. But it is none the less true that we are not by any means the only formative influences in our children's lives.

Our own influence is also both fallible and fluctuating if we rely only upon our own tentative ideas and upon commands, which, after the children have outgrown the age of any possible physical coercion, we have no sure way at all to enforce.

HOW ENFORCE OBEDIENCE?

We can plead and we can order. And the children may obey if they love us and are kindly disposed, or they may not if they consider the parents unduly alarmists or mentally behind the times.

And what can the nonreligious parent answer if his children disobey? Nothing effectual, because they have no unanswerable authority back of either their requests or their commands. The Catholic parent has the advantage here.

For instance. I do not always know whether the *décolleté* which my daughter may choose for a dance is in good taste or not. I do know what modesty is and, on an authority not mine, she knows it, too. I may not know what my boy's business demands in the way of social activity. He and I both know, however, that if he is intemperate or immoral he is committing a grave sin. My children's conversation may seem daring to me, but if it is sinful they will know it because the same Church has taught us both to know.

That is the great thing. There need be no abyss between the Catholic parent and child. It is incumbent upon them both to obey the laws of God, and parents may not any more than their children be profane, intemperate or careless of any of the Church's rules.

Not that there are not privileges which maturity brings, which children may not share. Not, most certainly that superior age and experience do not merit respect and attention, nor that children do not owe to conscientious parents courtesy and obedience.

But I do say and repeat that their rule must have an infallible foundation and that it must be permanently effective, irrespective of death or separation. In other words, if we have a rule above our own making to give to our children, then also as they grow into manhood and womanhood we can safely give their consciences into their own keeping and ourselves enjoy them without fears and friction.

I had a very dear friend, mother of a large family, who lived through the adolescence of her children with undisturbed placidity. Her relation with her entire family was one of the most beautiful things I have ever known. She

said: "No, I do not worry about the children. They go to confession and Communion regularly and they all have strong Faith. They cannot be doing anything very wrong."

THE REAL PLAN

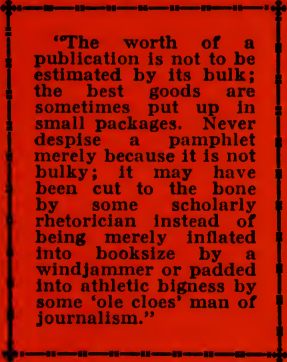
She had the only peace possible to family life. Parents' hearts have been broken, children's lives made miserable and houses divided against themselves over this question of lost youth, and all the while the solution lies in the logical, tried and inspired code of the Church.

Children now are asking for a standard not of this earth. If parents refuse it to them they are surely taking upon themselves a grave responsibility. Faith is not given to every one. But parents who have eyes to see and ears to hear the needs of their children, the claims of the Church, and their relation to each other, are surely lacking signally in parental love or conscientiousness if they refuse to make a thorough investigation of both.

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