

Church, School & Home

The Soldier-Sacrament The most important event in the childhood of every Catholic, apart from First Holy Communion, is the reception of Confirmation. Memory reproduces every detail of the great occasion for us as vividly as if it happened but yesterday. We can recall the examination which preceded it, when we proudly informed the Bishop that "Confirmation is a sacrament through which we receive the Holy Ghost to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ." Then follows the recollection of the great day itself, when we knelt at the altar rail as the Bishop anointed our forehead with Holy Chrism, saying: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." We still feel the slight blow on the cheek which he gave us to remind us that we must be ready to suffer every reproach, even death itself, for the sake of Christ.

Such recollections arouse a consciousness of how much the advancing years have rounded out our first notions regarding the significance of Confirmation—the Soldier-Sacrament. As children, we knew that the sacrament made us "strong and perfect Christians"; that it brought us to the maturity, as it were, of that spiritual life received in Baptism. Now we are capable of realizing fully all that these words imply. To those who have attained maturity comes the obligation of fighting the battles of their country. In this sacrament we, as subjects of Christ, our heavenly King, have received the Holy Ghost for strength in spiritual combat against the enemies of the Faith. The coming of the Holy Ghost transformed the Apostles from weak, timid men who hid themselves for fear of the Jews, into bold, intrepid defenders of the faith of Jesus Christ. Confirmation was instituted to produce a similar effect in us.

There is no armistice in the spiritual conflict which began with the Apostles. True, Catholics today do not live in the shadow of the halter and the sword; except in the face of such

abnormal conditions as exist in Russia, we are not called to lay down our lives for our faith. Still, we live in the midst of perils to our faith, both from within and without. To some comes the temptation to desert the Church for the sake of wealth or preferment; to others timidity and human respect suggest silence when duty demands an open profession of our Faith.

In times of trial and danger such as these, the grace of Confirmation constitutes a reserve force, by the assistance of which we are able to win the victory and remain loyal to Jesus Christ. Some Catholics, however, fail to realize that the measure of this divine help largely depends upon the earnestness with which we ask it of the Holy Ghost. Confirmation, since it gives us such powerful support in repelling the visible foes of our faith, has been well-named the Soldier-Sacrament.

Factors in Mental Development: Until recent years many people believed that each child, at the beginning of life, was equally well endowed with the capacity for learning.

This opinion is no longer held. Modern research shows how greatly human beings differ mentally. It is evident, however, that what a child brings with it into the world, in the way of hereditary characteristics, is the material with which the parents, the teacher and the child himself must work. For without such characteristics, or powers of latent capabilities, it would be impossible to explain mental development. Exterior environment alone will not suffice for an explanation. Even when the same activities are brought to bear on two different individuals widely divergent results follow. Whence can we say that this difference arose? Not from without, for the environment was identical. Hence it is from within—from that germ-like something which makes one capable of this development rather than of that. Parents and teachers, therefore, should center their attention on the child's aptitudes or special tendencies as they pass through successive stages of development.

We must not lose sight of the fact that each individual child is endowed with the essential qualities that constitute a human being. But in addition to these common features, which are found in all who participate human nature, each child is possessed of a peculiar group of individuating characteristics which are not to be exactly duplicated in any other member of the

race. This is true not only of organic features but more especially of mental characteristics. These latter are emphasized by growth, to such a degree that the greater the state of development, the wider will be the difference between any two members of the human race. Thus it is evident to all that there is a wider chasm between the minds of two adults than between those of two babes, in as much as each in the course of development ramified according to his own peculiar bent.

It has long been the custom to reduce the factors in mental development to two, Heredity and Environment. The future mental development of the child is first given direction by certain transmitted qualities received at the time of conception. These together with certain other qualities received from the mother during the period of gestation form the contribution of heredity to the shaping of the child's mind.

Inherited traits, however, may be overcome or accentuated by external influences which are grouped under the heading environment. Their effect is first felt during the prenatal life of the child. Other factors have their beginning during some stage of development subsequent to birth, such as the acquisition of speech, disease, accident and the like, all have their influence on the growth of mental powers. Some of these acquired factors are permanent in as much as they exercise an influence over development that lasts throughout life, such as one's acquired disposition, and habits which have never been uprooted. Others are transitory. They may leave some trace or other in the individual, but as a rule they are passing.

In relation to the developing individual the factors may be internal according as the impulse be from within the individual, as in the case of heredity instincts, and other such inborn factors; or external according as the impulse is from without. The external factors may be physical or social. Among the former we may mention climate, food conditions which may be the cause of energy or sluggishness, of health or disease in the organism. Narcotics and other such, the effect of which though primarily on the organism, also eventually affect the mind. Because of the plasticity of the growing child such factors are productive of enormous results in the period of youth. Among the social factors, environment, the culture of one's associates, teachers, etc., all play their part for good or evil in the forming of the

child's mind. Indeed the social factors are perhaps the most important factors in the training of the child.

The point of all that has just been said is that the progress and development of the child's education, has been to a certain extent determined before he enters the schoolroom. Moreover, after he begins school his progress is largely dependent on the influences outside the classroom. Parents who are concerned about the welfare of their children will be as careful to provide them with proper environment as they are in matters of physical health.

"Staying In" The oft-repeated cry that the youth of today are treading dangerous ground is assuming the proportions of a lamentation. What was originally a warning is becoming a wail. The dangers may be exaggerated in some quarters but it seems quite certain that in breaking with conventions in deportment and dress, the young folk are hazarding their health and, what is more important, their morals.

The goal of most youthful ambitions is evidently the acquisition of pleasure, and with alarming abandon, the modern boy and girl are hurrying here, there, and everywhere in the quest for amusement, for recreation. There is, of course, a legitimate desire for diversion, and it follows that there should be provided amusements which will satisfy this desire. But such a duty has not been assigned officially to the theatrical zanies. It should be taken care of, principally, in the same place where the education and culture of the child is provided for—in the Home.

This does not mean that the parents are called upon to emulate the popular comedians in their buffoonery. It means simply that they are expected to provide a domestic atmosphere which will render the child less eager to seek enjoyment elsewhere. Each particular home will have its own peculiar problem, but all will require an interest on the parents' part in the children's sports, and an attempt to direct their avocations into the correct channels.

Just because the modern girl thinks in terms of taxicabs and roadsters where her mother thought of bicycles and buggies does not mean that they cannot understand each other. The attentive mother will observe in her daughter impulses similar to those which she herself possessed, in her adolescence; and she has but to consult her own heart, to learn what will satisfy her

child's wishes. She can show an interest in the pleasure as well as in the work of her daughter; by careful suggestion and counsel she can make her advice practical and effective.

Though the father is not to be assigned exclusively to the supervision of the boys' sports, he is probably able to have a clearer insight into what a normal boy can, should, and will do to amuse himself. When the lad indicates a tendency toward some hobby, the father can encourage it if it be feasible, or endeavor to supplant it with a better if he does not approve the boy's own selection. There are few boys who do not relish the narration of the adventures of a father, and few fathers who have had such monotonous careers that they cannot find some interesting incidents to relate. There lies a field for exploitation.

All in all, it seems that the fast vanishing habit of "staying in" can be made less a burden and more a pleasure, if the parents will exercise some zeal in that regard.

