

Church, School & Home

"The Sacrament of the Dying" The gay, crimson foliage of Autumn, for all its glorious beauty, is but a danger signal that the icy hand of winter is hovering near, to bring death to the fields and the forest. It is also a perennial reminder that some day death will come to every one of us; perhaps, today; perhaps, not for years.

As Catholics, we hope that death will not take us unawares; that God in His goodness will send us His priest in that last, dread hour to bring us the support and consolation of the Last Sacraments. Saint or sinner, we need them all—Confession with its blessed assurance of God's forgiveness for past offences; Viaticum, itself "a pledge of everlasting life"; and the wonderful "Sacrament of the Dying"—Extreme Unction.

At the hour of death, even holy souls must often undergo mysterious, spiritual trials, compared to which, the sufferings of a pain-racked body are as nothing. Often, the dying are torn by remorse at the remembrance of sins committed and graces wasted. The uncertainty of their future destiny combined with the redoubled temptations of the evil spirits becomes for them a source of almost unendurable torture.

Many of us standing by the bedside of the dying, have seen the agony of this spiritual struggle reflected in the features of the sufferer before us. Then the priest came and administered Extreme Unction. As we knelt, watching and praying, we marvelled at the change which the Sacrament wrought in its recipient. A great calm replaced the signs of conflict formerly depicted in his countenance, showing that his soul had found peace, or, at least, strength to endure courageously until the end. This sacrament, instituted to bring health to the soul at the hour of death, had not failed to produce its proper effect.

Besides conferring strength of soul, Extreme Unction produces other effects no less beneficial to the dying. It takes away venial sin and the consequences of sin, in whole or in part, according to the disposition of the recipient. Moreover, if the

dying person be guilty of mortal sins, and for any reason be unable to confess them, they too are wiped out by Extreme Unction. However, if he should afterwards recover, he is still bound to confess such sins.

A secondary effect of the Sacrament is to restore health to the body, if such be the will of God. Many a sick person whose case the doctors have pronounced hopeless, has been restored to health by the power of Extreme Unction. The healing virtue of this Sacrament, however, is not the result of suggestion. The cures it has produced show that it is something apart from and superior to the "faith healing" practiced by Christian Scientists and other non-Catholic denominations.

Though Extreme Unction can be administered only to those in danger of death, its reception should not be deferred until the very last moment. Unfortunately this practice is becoming too prevalent, due to a mistaken desire to keep the sick person in ignorance of his dangerous condition as long as possible. Many a person has died without the sacraments because the family waited too long before sending for the priest. Catholics, therefore, should take no chances when they fall dangerously ill, but should insist that a priest be sent for at once.

Flexibility in Education A serious mistake often made, first in the family circle, and later in other fields which have to do with the education of the child is to attempt to cast all children in the self-same mold. Teachers, whether they be parents or others, are wont to set up an inflexible standard by which one and all coming under their direction are to be appraised. Often this standard is formed according to the personal lights of the educator. Thus one of a purely intellectual trend of mind will strive to root out whatever there may be of the emotional in his proteges; a highly active individual will allow no development of the contemplative side of a pupil's character. In other words the fault lies in this, that educators as a rule do not allow for the development of individual characteristics. The more advanced educators recognize this defect and are striving to correct it by a more complete and thorough grading system.

It is impossible for us to bring all men to the same intellectual average, and were it possible it would be far from advisable.

Each individual has his own peculiar content of heredity, with a definite temperament, and other features which must be allowed to develop according to their own bent. Nor would it be desirable to have a race of uniform characteristics. In variety there is beauty and harmony. Absolute uniformity would result in monotony. Differences of opinion, however painful they may seem to us, are far more pleasant than a monotony of perfect similarity. Thus the teacher must allow for individual features, for this diversity is a form of mutual compensation.

Many of our so-called objectionable features are not really objectionable in themselves, but by reason of excess or of wrong application. There is need of direction and repression rather than suppression. Otherwise the danger is that teachers may root something out which is essential for future development. The worst education possible is the education of "DON'TS"—the negative education. Rather the teacher should strive to obtain for the objectionable activity a new outlet which will be wholly legitimate. Its frequent repetition shows that it comes from the child's nature, that this tendency is part of his inner make-up, that he will be of greatest value and have the best success in such a line. Teach the child to utilize the tendencies which he now misuses. Take the "Miss" out of "misuse." When we say to a child, "Don't do this," we are educating him negatively, putting fear in place of confidence. Rather let us add, "Don't do it this way, but this," thus adding a positive element which will encourage the child. The purpose of education is not the destruction but the utilization of natural tendencies.

Books for Children Recently an author prefaced one of his works with this piquant dedication:

"To all those
who having one book
sometimes appreciate
another."

Deep-down in this humorous inscription there is a host of serious, sober thoughts. It involves the question of the value of books and reading; the place which books should occupy in our lives, and the place which books should occupy in the Home. This last-mentioned phase of the subject more immediately concerns us here.

Just how much good there is to be gained from reading depends greatly upon ourselves. Reading is an art, an art requiring cultivation, an art which some folk cannot acquire even by the most diligent cultivation. The lad who pores over the lurid pages of the Penny Dreadfuls may, by steps and stages, educate his taste for literature until he can appreciate the classics. But he will never reach that goal if he be thwarted, unless he be who constantly makes stepping-stones of stumbling-blocks, after the manner of the pioneer youth. Thwarting a youth's inclination toward reading may be accomplished in many ways besides direct inhibitions against it, and the most common and most casual way is to fail to provide him with reading matter.

Public libraries are not for reading. A few hours may be spent there perusing a volume, but usually reading is done elsewhere. The schoolroom is not the place for reading. There is scarcely time enough for the studies demanded by the curriculum to allow pupils to devote themselves to reading for any period of time. There is no other place but the home. Hence the duty of engendering the habit of reading and of putting books at the disposal of the children devolves upon the parents. They should provide Catholic literature above all, for the need for such reading material is clamant. The field of romantic fiction and travel books is broad enough to render a selection of some good books of that class comparatively facile.

There is danger in permitting children to select their own volumes promiscuously. Sir Walter Scott is authority for the statement that whatever we read brings some fruit. But Sir Walter was very evidently speaking for grownups when he made the assertion, for indiscriminate reading is as harmful as random friendships. Books are friends. The metaphor is a trite one but it is as true as it is trite. Books really ARE friends, and when well chosen, invaluable friends. They solace, they comfort, they entertain, they instruct. They supplement enormously the work of the classroom, so much so that it may be said that reading is the Royal Road to Learning.