Barbarous Babies

By Rt. Rev. Msgr. Peter M. H. Wynhoeven

Editor-in-Chief, Catholic Action of the South

THE BRIGHT AND MODEL CHILD

Everybody can attest from his own experience that, very often, the class leaders at school do not make good; in fact, sometimes they become failures, in practical, everyday life. Why is this? They know more than the others, and still their mentally slow, plodding classmate will outdistance them in the race for worldly success.

The explanation is simple and logical. First, the old saying, "Easily acquired, easily lost," holds good in the case. And second, a child who is allowed, even aided, to place himself on a pedestal, above and away from everybody, is handicapped in adjusting himself to the natural, normal way of living and dealing with others.

For these two reasons, the exceptionally bright, the model, child requires almost as much study and tactful handling as the slow or problem child. Because the bright child has no trouble learning his lessons and doing his schoolwork, he gets in the habit of acquiring things without much effort; he does not have to force himself or to discipline himself to gain the knowledge for which other children have to struggle and sacrifice. He grows up without having the idea slowly but surely dawn on him that he must pay for what he expects to get.

Having picked up his knowledge in a hurry, he often has not assimilated it for keeps. At the time of examination, he knows everything; a year afterward, he still may remember things superficially, but his knowledge is not grounded as strongly and as permanently as it is in the mind of the boy or girl who had to drive it down with sledge-hammer blows. He has missed many of the downright practical principles of education.

Furthermore, ahead of his classmates, and not needing the time allotted to the other pupils, he will be subject to forced idleness; he is more or less left to himself. This situation is never healthy, nor is it conducive to good. He may develop into a trifler and a dreamer.

However, for a bright child, the great danger lies in the fact that, because he is exceptional and is at the head of the parade scholastically, he also may make up his mind to excel in behavior and become a 100-per cent model pupil, "the parent's pride and the teacher's pet." Not that this would be an altogether unworthy ambition for any child. But, at least, the youngster's motives should be analyzed.

One who is good, well behaved, orderly, obedient and amenable—in other words, a model child—is in a tragic way if he contrasts himself with others and poisons his good qualities with conceit. Presently, he becomes a hypocrite; soon, he is disliked, if not hated, by his companions. Finally, the tense, unnatural situation will work on his nerves. He will develop into a despised misfit, for whom the necessary adjustment will be very difficult later on.

Parents and teachers should watch a bright child closely; they should treat him with the utmost wisdom and forethought. To control, in a kindly way, his easily inflated ego is of greater importance than to enhance his personality with praise.

Pushing and promoting him into classes ahead of his age will serve no particularly good purpose. He should be encouraged to interest himself in some extracurricular work which will engage his mind and talents in a useful way. A hobby that makes him exert his physical adaptability more than his mental ability may help to preoccupy him and to balance his talents. Do not let him sit in a corner, reading, all the time; make him get out and play with children of his own age. They may show him a few things in athletic prowess that will take him down from his superior attitude. He will learn to respect and admire others for feats to which he is unequal.

Do not be guilty of the grave injustice of holding him up as a model for the other children. If they do not have his ability, it is unfair to expect from them something of which they are incapable. Curb in him any tendency to be a "smart-aleck" and a "show-off."

Does all this mean that a child with exceptional ability and talents should be left unencouraged, his rightful ambition dampened, his youthful dreams thwarted? God forbid! That policy would most likely dishearten him and perhaps torture his mind to gloominess, and mischief. The last condition would be worse than the first. On the contrary, lead him carefully; encourage him with your great hopes of him, and afford him special opportunities to develop his talents to the fullest. But keep him always humble and appreciative of others.

Bolivian Mission More Primitive Than China Says Maryknoll Mission

NEW YORK.—Northern Bolivia, says Bishop James Walsh, Superior General of Maryknoll, in his first report from the first Maryknoll mission in South America, is more primitive than China, a pioneer country like Hudson Bay.

"Riberalta, our present center of operations," the Bishop reports, "is a pretty little town of 5,000 friendly, happy-go-lucky people. But it is a very countrified backwater, not like China which has rough but complete facilities, but more like Hudson Bay. It is minus everything, lacking in stores or supplies, primitive. It would scarcely rate as a good market town in South China. The few shops carry only small household necessities, bolts of cloth, rice, sugar, the oddments of rustic general stores.

"The region is jungle country where people live like trappers. Servants are scarce and while there are places in South America where men can live well for a song, this is not one of them. Too many necessities must be brought in from outside.

"We were given a touching welcome when we walked in here our first Sunday morning and we already feel at home. The few missioners of the region are charmingly hospitable despite quarters that are primitive indeed. Two of the priests with whom we stopped cooked their own meals. Only two rectories exist in our entire area, those of Riberalta and Cobija. Houses are needed immediately at Cachuela, Guayamarin, Villa Bella and three other centers. Travel is preposterously hard, builders are few and not too capable and labor, even unskilled, is difficult to get.

"The real mission work here will be rounding up the Indians in the jungle. The greatest activity of this frontier country will be creating and maintaining civilized living conditions. Those who know how to build, to cure, to grow things, will be real assets here."

Bishop Walsh accompanied to Bolivia the vanguard of three priests out of the band of twenty Maryknoll Missioners assigned to take up South American mission work.

Aims Realized

Today many realize the great aims for which Christ lived and died: and the result of their efforts is seen in the hospitals, the leper refuges, and other institutions which fill the earth with the splendor of Christian charity.

WAACs Have Priest At Training School As Post Chaplain

DES MOINES, Ia.—The religious phase of the training school here for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps is in the hands of the Rev. Urban J. Baer, Catholic priest, and a minister-chaplain, Lieut.-Col. John MacWilliams.

Chaplain MacWilliams is school chaplain and Father Baer is post chaplain. The priest, a reserve officer since 1935, has been on active duty since February, 1941. A director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Father Baer left a pastorate at Marshfield, Wis., to enter the Army.

ARMY APPROVES

Rensselaer, Ind. — St. Joseph's College is now on the approved list of all branches of the armed service for pre-officer training, according to a notice from the War Department received by the Very Rev. Dr. A. H. Dirksen, C.P.P.S., president.

Jesuit Superior Lauded For Valor

NEW YORK — The fact that Manila was spared even more severe damage in the Japanese bombing of that city was credited to the alertness and courage of the Very Rev. John F. Hurley, S.J., Superior of the Philippine Mission, by Colonel Andres Soriano, Secretary of Finance in the war-time cabinet of President Manuel Quezon, in describing the memorable events of the attack while on a visit here.

Manila, Colonel Soriano said, escaped further damage because vessels in the harbor which constituted military objectives were hurried removed. He credited Father Hurley with having inspired their removal, fearing the critical situation, Colonel Soriano said, Father Hurley quickly interposed friends in the city and they obtained launches and towed the vessels away.

Colonel Soriano said he himself had gone out with Father Hurley to help in the work.

Proves Beyond Doubt

Criticism of our neighbor's shortcomings does not prove that we are free from the blame which we blame; but it proves beyond doubt that our heart is in evil case, and that we have an overweening opinion of ourselves.

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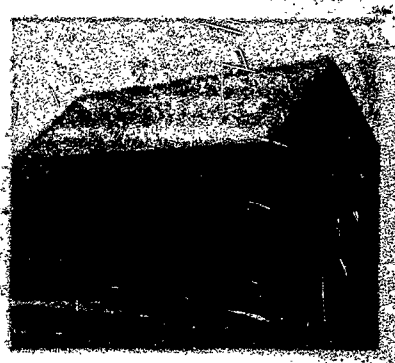

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