

RECLAIMED

The year had passed swiftly by and again the annual retreat was at hand. The noted Dominican preacher, Father Magnein, had promised to conduct it, and most of the students were looking forward with pleasant anticipation to a retreat which promised to be the best ever held within the walls of St. Victor's College.

Yet, in the College of St. Victor, as in every other college, there were a few who looked forward, not to the retreat, but to the rest and pleasure that they were going to derive from that period when the ordinary activity of college life would be suspended.

Within a certain room four boys were congregated, smoking leisurely. The room, apparently occupied by two students, presented a very unfavorable appearance to an onlooker, and would surely have led him to question the neatness of its occupants. Save for a few pictures of noted pugilists pasted here and there, and a row of empty cigarette boxes which covered every available part of the wainscotting, it was entirely devoid of decoration. Indeed, wild confusion and disorder reigned here surpeme.

The beds, upon which our four characters were lazily reclining, were half made, the floors were dirty and littered with cigarette butts, and the desks, which one would have expected to see piled high with books, were covered with a conglomeration of objects in the form of tobacco boxes, cigarette papers and matches, with an occasional dirty collar interspersed amongst them.

"Goin' to make the retreat this year, Ned?" asked one of the four, a lazy-looking piece of humanity, named Joe Grogan.

The person interrogated struck a match on the wall, relit his cigarette carelessly, puffed vigorously for a few moments and at length turned a quizzical glance upon the speaker.

"Say, what do you take me for, one of those saintly guys with long faces? No, I'm not goin' to make any retreat."

"But I don't see why you shouldn't. It's by no means difficult, and if any of the bunch need it we do."

The speaker, somewhat smaller than the other three, drew upon himself, by this remark, a shower of epithets from Ned, who seemed to be the leader of the group.

"What, so you've turned sissy! I suppose you've allowed Father Arnold to turn you into a little saint?" (Father Arnold was the Prefect of Discipline.)

"Father Arnold," the other replied, "has treated us fair and square. You know he might have squealed on us to the Rector, that night we skipped in, but he didn't. Father Arnold and I are good friends now, and what's more, I'm going to try and make a *good retreat*."

A few hours after this meeting Father Arnold was sitting in his room when a knock sounded at the door, and, to his surprise, in stepped Jimmy West.

Jimmy, who had a name for insubordination in the college, had solemnly promised Father Arnold to avoid all trouble in the future, but when the Prefect saw him he concluded that he had again been sent up for punishment.

"Well Sir, what is it this time?"

"Father, I want to tell you something."

"Well, out with it. I suppose you have broken the rules again?"

"No Father, I haven't. I'm not going to break the rules anymore."

"I am truly glad to hear that, my boy, stick to your resolution and we will always be friends. But what did you wish to tell me?"

"Father, I don't want to be a tell-tale, but I'm afraid that my three chums, Ned Ryan, Joe Grogan, and Tom Winter are not going to make the retreat."

"Not going to make the retreat, eh?" Father Arnold repeated the words several times. It was plain that he had forgotten himself for the moment; however he remembered almost immediately and turned to look reproachfully at Jimmy.

"My boy, don't you know you shouldn't tell such things?"

Jimmy looked confused and eyed his boots. "I only meant it for the best, Father," he said.

When Jimmy had gone Father Arnold began thinking hard. Seven months ago those lads had been sent to St. Victor's by parents who were anxious to see their sons profit by a good college course. But the boys, far from appreciating the golden opportunity offered them, squandered their time recklessly and scoffed at discipline. Father Arnold was a busy man, and in no position to take the four

under his personal care. Time and again reports had been sent to their parents, but their threats and entreaties seemed to effect no change in the lives of their wayward sons, and Father Arnold now saw only one course open to him.

He hated to expel the boys for he knew it would mean a hard blow to their parents; but duty was duty, and these boys, by their pernicious example might lead others astray. Now that one of them had reformed he decided to wait for a short time to see if the others would follow their comrades example; in the meantime he would keep his eye on them.

It was the first day of the retreat and three of the boys were seated in the untidy room, talking, despite the ban of silence.

"Well, since it's started we may as well have some fun;" Tom Winter was saying, "How about skippin' down to the pond during the afternoon's conference and havin' a little skate?"

"Great!" said Ned Ryan, throwing the remains of a cigarette into the bucket, "That's just what we'll do."

"But, will Father Arnold be around?" interposed the more cautious Joe Grogan, "He's been watchin' us closely for quite a while."

"Pshaw! He suspects nothing, and besides he'll probably be in Town."

"Well, it's agreed," said Tom Winter, rising and stretching himself, "At three-thirty then, out of my window because it's on first corridor and nearest the road. Ho! Hum! I'm goin' down to have a nap. See you fellows later."

At 3.30 an observer passing by a *certain* section of the college building might have seen three figures creep out a *certain* corner window on the first floor, and disappear down a *certain* slope in the direction of the College Lake.

And there was an observer; a large man wearing a black coat with turned up fur collar, and fur cap, who, unseen by the boys, had watched their departure and followed them later.

When they had reached the lake it didn't take the boys long to don their skates, and they were soon whirling over the smooth and glassy surface.

"This is great." cried Tom to Joe Grogan, who was describing figures and fantastic curves on the ice. "It's a lot better than sitting at a dry old conference, anyhow."

"You bet." said Joe

Ned remarked that a cigarette would warm them up a bit so he produced a package and the trio "lit up."

"You see that old tree stickin' up out there?" said Ned
"Yes."

"Well, I bet a quarter I can lick you both to it. What do you say?"

"It's a go." shouted the other two in unison, and at a signal the three shot off like three arrows towards the distant goal. The race became fast and furious and the boys looked neither to the right nor to the left but bent all their energies to the test. If they *had* looked behind they might have received another stimulus, the form of the large man who skated rapidly after them.

It was soon apparent that Ned Ryan would win his bet, he was already twenty yards ahead of the others, and fast lessening the distance between himself and the goal. The man who followed, evidently had no desire to participate in the race as he was far in the rear, and enjoying the beauty of the snow-clad hills and forests that loomed in the distance.

Suddenly, however, he was roused to greater activity by a shout from ahead, and looking at the racers, he saw that one of them had disappeared and the others were making frantic efforts to check their speed; he grasped the situation instantly and started to the rescue.

A boy was struggling in the water and obviously growing weaker; the others seemed too confused to do anything. When the dark figure swept upon them the two boys shouted simultaneously, "Father Arnold." Off came the black coat, and, without hesitation the priest leaped into the icy water. A few strokes brought him to the sinking boy, and he seized him just as he was about giving up the struggle. As the open water space reached to the bank, Father Arnold had no trouble in bringing the boy to safety. Seizing his coat he wrapt it about the shivering lad and turned to the others who were standing by with ashy faces.

"Give me a coat, one of you" he said.

Tom Winter took off his coat and handed it to the priest, who after throwing it over his shoulders, picked up the half-conscious boy and started off for the college; Tom Winter and Joe Grogan with bowed heads and crest-fallen appearance followed after.

They reached the College at last. Ned Ryan was placed in the Infirmary, where he developed a high fever, and for a few days, raved in delirium. At such times he would sit up in bed, and to the horror of the good sisters, declare, "I won't keep the retreat! I won't keep the retreat!"

Father Arnold too, was immediately put to bed, and as he was none too rugged at any time, it was feared that in his case pneumonia would develop.

An air of anxiety hung over the entire building which had an elevating affect upon the minds of all; never before had there been such a retreat at St. Victor's. Every student seemed to catch the spirit of the occasion, and prayer after prayer was offered for the recovery of the heroic Prefect and the erring boy. Father Magnein preached as he had never preached before. He laid before them vividly their position in college: their benefits and advantages, their trials and temptations. In an eloquent appeal he exhorted them all to guard carefully the precious years that would lay a foundation for a happy future.

He spoke of life's neglected opportunities, and of Judgment, and while he pictured the horrors of that awful day, his hearers listened spellbound, afraid to move lest by so doing, they would break the link that bound them so close to God.

Two boys, in that chapel, listened with more than ordinary attention, and in their souls were planted noble desires for perfection and detestation of the past.

Tom Winter and Joe Grogan had turned from the "broad way that leadeth to destruction," and had placed their feet upon the "narrow way that leadeth to everlasting life."

F. C. C. '26

