

EARLY IMPRESSIONS

S. M. I. '43

In man's journey from the cradle to the tomb there is no period during which proper and wise guidance is of so much importance as that of childhood. The influences which are then brought to bear on the young mind may have a lasting effect. It was with justice, then, that Wordsworth wrote these oft-quoted lines: "The child is father of the man." It is merely the expression in a new form of a truth as general as mankind.

In the growth of a plant it is well known that on the care bestowed on it while young hinges the success or failure of its maturity. Proper degrees of light and heat must be provided and everything which might prove dangerous to its proper development must be removed. If weeds which encumber the growth of the young plant are left untouched, it will grow wild and unmanageable, and betray the want of care in the inferiority of its fruit.

With the human plant it is much the same. The young child is strongly influenced by its surroundings, be they favorable or detrimental to its future well-being. If care is not taken to remove all noxious influences, the child will receive impressions prejudicial to its whole career. A false notion has taken possession of the minds of many who supposed that education proper begins with the age of reason. This is far from the truth, as experience proves. For long before the child has reached that period of life when it is imagined that the mental faculties first dawn into reason's activity, it is strongly acted upon by the object and circumstances which marks its environment. The more tender the age of the young child, the more susceptible it is to outward impressions, evil as well as good.

In those parts of large cities where vice holds sway and crime is a familiar spectacle, it is rare that the young offsprings grow up to be worthy citizens. Born amidst low and degraded surroundings they see nothing that leads to virtue and become wicked because everything around them points to a life of crime. It would be preposterous to suppose that among all such children there exists no sport of goodness which would need but the magic touch of an encouraging hand to burst into flame. In fact, if the child of the most wicked parents is removed from its unhealthy abode to a

congenial place of safety where it may be taught by example that vice is to be abhorred and virtue fondly sought after, the change from what might have been will be truly amazing. There is something good in the constitution of every human being, but proper guidance during the tender years of childhood is absolutely essential. If a child is born in a truly Christian family where virtue assumes its true place, where every action springs from a high motive, and where love and its consequent kindness rule supreme, we may reasonably presume that on account of such happy surroundings its path through life will be marked by uprightness and honor.

The home training is the most important factor in education. It is the groundwork of the rest and, if it is not stable and sound, its superstructure must necessarily be weak. And if the power of early impressions is appreciated as it ought to be, primary education will embrace the training of every faculty of the human being.

It is highly important that the young body should receive that nourishment and exercise which its healthy development demands. Everything should be done to enable it to withstand the hardships and trials which this life necessarily imposes. For him, however, who in his infancy is rocked in the lap of luxury, the chances of growing up to a standard and sturdy manhood are less favorable than for the offspring of the poorer middle-class whose childhood employs but a scanty competency.

The young intellect should always be the object of careful attention. The first thing to be taught is that virtue is commendable and desirable. This is best done by force of example. High ideals should always be placed before the child, and the defeat and punishment of vice should be one of the pictures frequently shown it. It should be taught the beauty of kindness and love and the happy results which follow in their wake. Childhood is the time to inculcate those principles of truth and justice which are the brightest ornaments in human character.

In regard to the youthful will the parents should be likewise solicitous, as on the proper training of this faculty depends, in large measure, the success of earthly life. Firmness should be practised in dealing with the young, but it must always be tempered with kindness and gentleness so that parents may not be regarded as tyrants but as loving friends.

In religion above all it is of great moment that the early impressions be favorable. In all circumstances and on all occasions should reverence be manifested towards sacred things. Parents may well go beyond the limits which duty prescribes in order that their children may obtain the highest possible love and admiration for all that conduces to the spiritual welfare.

If, in later years, persons fall away from the path of virtue, the strength of early teachings will not be lost. For how often does it not happen that the remembrance of some chance event in childhood has the effect of deterring men from crime and leading them back to the ways of righteousness! How often is the influence of an early impression the means of bringing grace and peace in dying moments to the souls of the most hardened sinners!

THE LATE JOHN PATRICK OATWAY

Philip Steele, '45

With the death of John Oatway, who died in the Charlottetown Hospital on January 15, 1942, St. Dunstan's College parted with a highly esteemed student.

John was born on September 19, 1922, at Charlottetown. He received his early education at Queen Square School, apart from a year and a half which he spent at Pleasant Grove. John always held a high rank in his class and was awarded the Governor General's Medal for proficiency on the completion of grade ten. Following his successful completion of the Prince of Wales matriculation examinations, he entered St. Mary's Redemptorist College at Brockville, Ontario, where he spent the next two years. Last September he enrolled at St. Dunstan's as a member of the freshman class.

About a year ago John underwent an operation from which he did not completely recover. Despite this physical handicap he took an energetic part in college activities and entered whole-heartedly into his studies. Such was his reticence about his physical indisposition that even his classmates did not suspect that he was in poor health. Pneumonia and rheumatic fever contracted during the Christmas holidays proved fatal.

Possessed of a kind and gentle disposition, he gained for himself many friends during his short life. He was an apt