

and very soon he was at the head of his class,

But his happiest day was, as it should be, the day of his first Communion. He had been amongst the chosen few that were selected by the Pastor on account of their fitness, to be numbered amongst the invited to the banquet of the Lord. He understood better than most boys of his age the importance of the first Communion and accordingly, prepared himself for so great an event with redoubled efforts and with renewed fervor; and when the Lord at last did come and His divine eyes were gladdened by the spotless beauty of the wedding garment, we must not be surprised to know that it was the brightest day of all the fair season of his earthly sojourn. An interior voice, no doubt, whispered to him then, and in repeating echoes ever after, that his life, like that of young Samuel was to be unreservedly consecrated to the Lord.

This was the first call to the spiritual life. Let us, nevertheless, confess that his first fervor underwent a cooling off between the ages of twelve and seventeen. He did not become exactly bad, he only became less good. In the struggles between grace and nature, the latter sometimes had the victory,—curiosity so natural to our self-love sought to penetrate the veil which conceals from the eye of the unlearned many things, the knowledge of which is reserved for a maturer age.

This short span of his life was the constant subject of his regrets, the theme of a long and plaintive song of lamentation. But as it was an ever-recurring one he had an opportunity of thinking well on it, nay more, he found each time fresh motives to praise the Divine Mercy and to humble himself, a larger field for the generous soul, and nobler deeds which could be done and more glorious victories yet to be won by the young Christian soldier.

In the meantime the departure of his brother took place for the Benedictine Abbey of Atchison, Kansas, where he lived long enough to make his solid virtues known and his loss deeply felt, for he soon left there for a better life—his true and last home.

The entrance of his brother in religion awakened his first fervor and desires, and through his pastor who recommended him, he sought for admittance into our novitiate and was admitted. What a change for the habits of a young man! He had till now breathed the free air of the fields—he had handled the plow and the horses—he could speak freely, his table was frugal but abundant. Now he is confined in a cell when he is not in prayer; takes and returns his books; can speak but seldom; meat is offered only to the sick. His sleep is interrupted at the very hour when it seems most needed and when nature begins to taste its salutary sweetness. How many among those who have preceded and follow him have been unable to naturalize themselves to that change which contrasts so absolutely with the ordinary life of people in the world?

Our young recruit of seventeen was not shaken for a moment; it cost him something, however, to adapt his taste to our meagre and peculiar system of diet; so different in every respect to what he had been accustomed. They were for him so many occasions of doing penance, so much the more meritorious as they were not his choice. And yet that is only the natural side. There is another, much more difficult and which requires the labor of a life-time, viz: the formation of the true monk or spiritual man—for the habit never makes the monk according to the time honored phrase: "*Habitus non facit monachus.*"

One cannot be a genuine Benedictine monk unless he fills up the following requirements: piety, obedience, humil-