

and greed, which is surely not the real France.

When Briand died he was mourned by British statesmen as "not only a great Frenchman, but the greatest European of us all." The country which produced Briand cannot be wholly provincial, any more than can the country

which produced Wilson forever hold aloof from the vital interests of its neighbors. The recapture of the harmony and friendship which existed between Washington and Rochambeau has seemed singularly far off for the past decade, but France instantly took Lindbergh to her heart and America

was not uncordial to Laval. Never was the need of ambassadors in large number more apparent. If we are ever to appreciate the extraordinary chapter of history through which we are now living one of the most necessary requirements is sure to be a genuine entente with France.

THE FINE ART OF LETTING GO

A PARENT TALKS OF HIS BOY BILL

By *Lewis Gaston Leary*

My wife and I are again passing through that difficult period of family life when dinner-table conversation with a high-school son resembles the cross-examination of a reluctant witness by opposing counsel. On the average, it takes four courteous inquiries, plus two maternal pleadings and one stern paternal admonition, to drag out of him a sketchy bit of information about some inconsequential happening of the day.

While I must confess that this "none of your business" attitude toward a natural interest in the doings of our offspring sometimes irritates me, it does not worry me at all; for I know more about what is going on inside the boy's head than he thinks I do, and I realize that the unnecessary secretiveness of adolescence, its extravagant assumptions of independence, and even its deliberately provocative challenges to parental authority, are by-products of an entirely wholesome instinct, the absence of which in any of my children would seriously disturb my peace of mind.

If the adult years are to be successful and happy, the adolescent period must be marked by two outstanding achievements: the development of a well-balanced and healthful attitude toward sex, and an emancipation from the childish reliance on the parents. The latter achievement means the attainment of an emotional independence, a new sense of individualism, an entity of existence which is self-conscious and self-sustaining and not any longer rooted in the parental home. Therefore all normal young people are egotistical; for the fuller realization of the *I* in them is a vitally necessary accomplish-

ment of the transition stage between childhood and maturity.

That annoying son of mine is probably too busy about other things to analyze his present attitude toward his mother and me, beyond concluding that he is old enough now to live his own life, make his own decisions, have his own private thoughts, and in general be treated like a man; but what he is really trying to do is to detach his individuality from us, so that instead of being "our son, William" he will be—himself. If he steps on other people's toes while he is making this difficult transfer, we shall try to be patient with him; for it is a job that he has never tackled before.

For us who are parents, all the law and the prophets hang on two great commandments: "Thou shalt provide the best possible home for thy children," and "When the time comes, thou shalt let thy children go." These two may be further compressed into one sentence—

The whole duty of parents is to prepare children for leaving the parental home to establish new homes of their own.

We parents do not like to see the children growing away from their dependence on us. Yet there comes a time when parents must do just that—for their children's sake.

It is probable that most American homes need more discipline rather than less, and I am far from suggesting that immature girls and boys should always do as they please. The largest values of parental discipline, however, are developed during the earlier years when it is taken for granted by the children,

not in the later period when it is so apt to precipitate pitched battles between the older and younger generations, and when, in any case, no amount of external authority can insure the young people's going straight unless there is also an inner compulsion toward right living.

With any relaxing of discipline, there is, of course, a chance that the children—who, after all, are not nearly as competent to deal with life's problems as they think they are—may come to harm. There is always a chance that any splendid adventure, like growing up, may go wrong. But if parental discipline is carried to the point where it stunts the new individualism of the teen age, then there is no question as to what will happen. The children will *certainly* come to harm.

So this is at once the hardest task and the crucial test of parenthood: not merely to let the children go when we are forced to do so, but to face bravely and cheerfully the fact that the time of their emancipation is at hand, and actually to help them break away from us.

In a far greater number of instances, however, than is generally realized, parents never come to the point where they are willing to abdicate their authority, no matter how far the children may have passed beyond the period of infancy.

A brilliant young freshman must lunch with his mother every day at the university cafeteria. A senior who is a "letter man," as well as a leader in the social life of his college, must report to his father, through the janitor of his dormitory, the exact time at which he

enters the building every night. A student in a professional school must account for every cent of his allowance. A daughter of thirty-five must telephone home if a shopping expedition takes a half-hour longer than was expected. A son of forty dares not call on any woman who has not first been approved by his mother. A man of fifty is referred to by his father as "only a thoughtless boy."

There are parents who would be very indignant if their love for their children were questioned, and yet are not willing to sacrifice their own possessive pride and sense of power, so that the children may live their own lives in their own way. Such parents cherish their children as the connoisseur cherishes his choicest treasures, from which nothing could force him to part. They will fight for their children, as the miser will fight for his gold. But they will not consent to their children's being anything except *their children*.

Of all manifestations of the opposing interests of the older and younger generations, the conflict between father and son is ordinarily the most open and noisy—and the least likely to result in permanent harm to the child. For one thing, it has some of the characteristics of a stand-up fight between man and man, where blows are lustily given and taken, but after which neither victor nor vanquished is supposed to bear any ill-will. Also, if worst comes to worst, it is easier for a boy to run away from home than it is for a girl, and many a youth has found his manhood when he battled with the world all alone, with a homesick lump in his throat.

Nevertheless, conflicts between fathers and sons over matters of family discipline have, in the aggregate, been responsible for a vast amount of sorrow. There are several ways in which such a struggle may issue. The ideal solution, of course, is for the two parties to talk the whole situation over, and, with mutual concessions, come to a satisfactory working agreement for the future. Sometimes, however, the succession of quarrels continues to disturb the harmony of the home until the son leaves it. Sometimes the son wins a victory which is too premature and complete to be entirely safe for him. Sometimes the father wins a decisive victory, at the probable cost of a serious warping of

his son's personality. More often, the son renders a submission which is only apparent; for the instinctive demand for independence is so insistent that, if denied recognition at home, it will almost certainly seek clandestine forms of self-expression.

Consider, for example, that charming young man of the world, Philip Van Stitt. His father is rich, cultured, religious, home-loving, devoted to his children—and incredibly foolish. At least, his foolishness would be incredible if it were not of such a common type. When Philip is with his parents, he is a model son; away from home, he is going to the bad in the most open-eyed and cold-blooded way imaginable. He is much too proud and self-willed to be influenced by evil companions; indeed, he would be ashamed of himself if he felt that he had sinned because he had been tempted beyond his strength to resist. Yet every Saturday night he sets out, absolutely sober and all alone, to do the most unspeakable things he can think of.

When we learn that Philip never suffers from any scourging of conscience after a debauch, but, on the contrary, enjoys a rare sense of physical well-being and spiritual satisfaction, he becomes quite easy to understand. Although he is well on in his twenties, his father insists on treating him as if he were an irresponsible child; so he periodically commits all the sins which he thinks would shock his father the most. Yet he does not care whether his father learns about his misdeeds or not, nor does he go out of his way to let his friends know what a devil of a fellow he is. It is only to himself that Philip feels the need of demonstrating the independence and daring and virility which he is not permitted to exhibit at home.



Because the development of a mature and wholesome attitude toward sex is at once the most necessary and the most difficult achievement of the adolescent period, a serious disturbance in any sector of the environment of youth is apt to result in a far-reaching and, to an untrained observer, apparently unrelated disturbance of the sex-life, and this is especially likely to occur when a conflict over family discipline is al-

lowed to reach a critical intensity. To the protest which is often heard from proud and domineering parents, "Why should such a thing happen in *my* home?" the correct reply would be, "Yours is exactly the kind of a home in which such things do happen."

One of the products of the inter-relation between disciplinary conflicts and the mating instinct is the not uncommon type of adolescent love affair which, at bottom, is only a hastily and perhaps unconsciously chosen device for escaping from parental control. Many a girl, especially, rushes into marriage in order to free herself from what she considers intolerable conditions at home. To such a state of mind, marriage stands for an acknowledged maturity; it promises an immediate personal independence. The girl dwells on the pleasures and opportunities of matrimony; she is less concerned with its obligations. A man is, of course, necessary to her escape; but the particular "boy friend" may be hardly more than a symbol of love and freedom. At any rate, he will take her away from her father, or from her mother, as the case may be. In other words, her main object in marrying is not to get anywhere with her life, but just to get away from somewhere, namely, her home. It is no wonder that such marriages are not always successful.

But if some marriages prove unhappy because the chief motivation of the bride was a desire to leave home, other marriages turn out badly for exactly the opposite reason, that is, either the bride or the groom had failed to achieve the adult independence of the childhood home which is essential to a satisfactory wedded life. The religious teaching that a man shall "leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife" is another way of saying that a true marriage demands the shifting of the emotional focus of life from the parent to the mate. A man whose father or mother still holds the central place in his thought and affection is not prepared to make a success of the difficult business of being a husband, and a girl who comes to marriageable age still feeling a childish need of her parents stands very little chance of being able to adjust herself to living with a man who is not even a blood-relation.

And the tragedy of it lies in the fact that, only a few years ago, what these

same people wanted most was to become free from their parents so that they might live their own lives.

That is what my troublesome son wants at the present moment. What am I going to do about him?

As with all problems which involve conflicting personal interests, there will have to be a spirit of give-and-take between the individuals concerned, as well as a continual compromising between theory and practice. Any boy whose ideas of fair play are buttressed by a healthy sense of humor will agree that he must submit to a certain amount of parental discipline as long as he is being housed, fed, clothed and educated by his parents, and will take a good deal of frank criticism from the man who is supporting him, even when the interference with his private affairs seems uncalled for. On the other hand, it would be foolish for a father to lose

any sleep because a son in his teens does not always spring to attention when he is spoken to, or to suspect him of being hell-bent because he no longer tells everything that he does and thinks, or to let his own temper be ruined by the chronic grouching of adolescence; for, with all the clumsy, exaggerated and irritating manifestations of the revolt of youth, the worst thing that could happen would be for the revolt to fail.

So if this boy wants to follow his biggest brother on the varsity football team, I shall again take the chance of having a son crippled in body, rather than risk crippling his spirit. If he wants to go to sea, he will not have to run away; for I shall try to find him as good a berth as I did for his brother who shipped before the mast at the mature age of sixteen. If he falls in love with any girl whom I do not positively know to be a moron or a jailbird, I shall take a chance on her being as wonder-

ful as he thinks she is, or if not, on his finding that out without my assistance. And whenever he shows that I am somewhat off the centre of his cosmos, I shall take a chance on my new position being the ideal one for me to occupy.

For, if he is ever going to make anything out of his life, he must learn how to solve his own problems; he must take his own risks and suffer for his own mistakes; he must pick his own chums, choose his own job, marry his own wife, and live in his own home. In a word, "my son" must change into a man; and, because no one can become a man over night, I agree with him that the best time for him to start trying to be one is right now.

And if sometimes, when he is unusually provoking and I am unusually tired, I forget for the moment how much his nascent manhood means to him, I am sure that he is man enough already not to hold it against me.

A WORKER

By S. Funaroff

I

Tousle of windy sun
in windlashed leaves
of crashing tamaracks.

Bob of cotton-head
in a southern mill.

Burn of pouring steel
in the iron shadows
of a steel mill.

Headlight on an
electric car
digging into the coaldark.

Glowing body warm with labor;
sweating, chatting,
laughing like highlights
in whirling winking wheels
clicking cogs of creativity;
busy . . . busy . . .

II

There came a time of
no work no work—
no unifying bond.
His idle hands dissipated;
heart and mind and body dissipated
and his face paled with shadows.

Outcast from his element,
he wandered in gray city streets
a drunken and groping god
brooding in bewildering mists.

And when he hurtled from the bridge,
there he was,—
bohunk, miner,
cotton millhand and steel worker—
a great blonde giant in the scarlet waters,
in the lethal bath of the big city at sunset.

And the first star like a lorgnette
came peering into this magnificent workshop,
his former home,
calm, indifferent.