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The Boy's Love of Fighting

Herbert L. Cochley, Medford, N. J.

Leader of One of the Groups in Burlington County, N. J.

(Read at the recent regular County Leaders' Conference)

OF course we understand that all normal boys love to fight; that is one of the inherent traits in every healthy, red-blooded youngster. And while we are speaking of that trait, we might as well confess that none of us have grown completely away from our love of a scrap. That is one of the things that made the "strenuous" Roosevelt so extremely popular, and down deep in our hearts, whether we admit it or not, is an abiding admiration for the man who puts up a good, stiff fight for the right, or what he honestly believes is right!

But the work for us is to train and develop that love of fighting in the boy, so that it will be a help to him, to make him more manly and self-reliant.

If the boy is allowed to run wild, without restraint or without a strict training of the finer qualities—the spiritual side of the boy—this love of fighting will usually degenerate into mere brutality, and he will become one of those myriads of men who merely exist to eat, drink, and sleep, with a necessary amount of work, and what gross pleasures they can enjoy. But if the finer sensibilities of the boy are cultivated, and this trait is developed into its full manliness, he will become one of those men who are such a blessing to mankind, and one of whom our Master said, "Ye are the salt of the earth."

If we would only take the trouble to look thoroughly into the matter, we would find that this fighting spirit is one of the greatest gifts bestowed on man. Everything that makes life worth living, every art, every invention, everything we use in our daily routine, that makes life easier and more pleasant and comfortable, is the result of some man's unconquerable disposition, or, in other words, this fighting trait logically developed. We know that all our great leaders, our inventors, and our noted scientists would never have accomplished what they did if they had not

had that fighting quality that never knows when it is licked, and will never say "die." The spirit that does things in this world is the spirit shown by our first admiral, John Paul Jones. You know when the English asked if he had surrendered he replied, "No, I haven't begun to fight yet!"

Even our religion comes to us through that same spirit as manifested in Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome, the Covenanters, and other untold thousands who preferred to die rather than give up their honest conviction.

So, when we are dealing with the boy's love of fighting, we have to do with the greatest possible power for right or wrong! In proportion as a ship is swift, it needs a strong helmsman; in proportion as a horse is spirited, it needs a strong driver; so in proportion as a boy has fighting propensities, he needs a strong hand to guide him. But remember this: frequently the stronger a boy, and the more trouble it is to get him and keep him in the right track, the greater power for good he will eventually become in this world!

Some years ago, in northern Indiana, near Chicago, where I was born and raised, they were holding a great camp-meeting. There was one young fellow in the neighborhood, just a boy, and one of the leaders of a gang of youths who were fast drifting into regular toughs and becoming a terror to the community. Of course they went to the meetings; everybody did. A noted bishop was in charge of the services, and he noticed this boy, how bright he was, a leader among the others, and he hunted him up to talk to him. The young fellow was quite insolent at first, but the bishop went after him again and again, and finally got him interested and then into the church. After he had been taken into membership, the bishop's friends asked him what he was going to do with the lad; how he would soon fall out and be worse than ever.

"Why," said the bishop, "I am going to see to him myself." And he did. He looked after the boy, and when he left he took the young fellow along, and helped him until he was ordained to the ministry. That young man has grown until he is a power in the Northwest. He

is slated for the bishopric, and that virile fighting force and energy will make him one of the great bishops of America. The churchman saw the possibilities in that boy, how his power was being directed in the wrong channel, and he tried his best to put him in the right road. Of course it was a lot of trouble, anxiety, and expense, but before he died, when that bishop saw such a strong, forceful young man coming after him and following his own footsteps, don't you think he felt repaid a hundred, yes a thousand fold for all that time and trouble?

In one of our Southern Associations, one numbering its members up into the thousands, and with a large corps of secretaries, the General Secretary and one of the city ministers were holding a conversation about one of the Y. M. C. A. boys. Now this comes direct from the secretary himself, who was almost in despair as to what should be done. The boy was an extreme, always wanting to fight, always stirring up trouble.

"Does he cheat?" the minister finally asked

"Well—no," the secretary answered, "he fights in the open."

"Then you want to get him," said the minister decisively. "He is just the kind of a fellow you want for a boys' leader. I know his mother, and she will be glad to help you."

The secretary saw the boys' mother, and she was more than willing to help, for she had been worrying for some time about the tendencies of her son. It was long, hard work, but they finally got his unlimited energy turned in the right direction. He had fought fair, even in his deviltry, and since he is trying to do right he is becoming one of the very greatest helps to that Association, for he is a born leader, and the boys all trust him, for they know he will give them a square deal. Now he is fighting the devil just as hard as he used to fight everything good!

Of course all boys are not allowed to run wild; a great many are trained from childhood, and often their tastes turn naturally in the right direction; but the good that every man will accomplish in this world is in direct proportion to his fighting spirit, and I firmly believe that the greatest asset any boy can have is an unconquerable determination, if it is started, and kept, in the right direction.

Then there is one more angle from which to look at it, more from a material standpoint. This is the day of efficiency; the efficiency experts are abroad in the land. They go through the factories and offices with a stop-watch, timing a man's movements to the fraction of a second, and then show him how to do his work a little

quicker and a little better. They will even take the day laborers and show them how to throw a shovelful of dirt with the least expenditure of time and muscle. Then they will go all through a man's business, explaining how to save a waste of labor at one place and a waste of material at another place.

But they have not touched the real basis or foundation of this tremendous waste that is going on all about us, the wasted manhood and womanhood of America. That rests with the training of the boys and girls of our country! When a man or woman gets thoroughly bad, it is not much use trying to reform them. The way to do it is to keep them from getting bad! That is where the great work must be done!

And looking at it just from this one standpoint, if this inherent love of fighting, which is a birthright of every normal boy, were only directed towards fighting for what is right—for a square deal—in school-life, then in business, in politics, and, yes, in religion too, what a wonderful transformation one generation could accomplish for America. It is almost inconceivable what could be done if all our boys could only have the proper training!

But that is what we are here for, each one of us to do our best towards helping in this work, so that when we pass on, we can say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, . . . I have kept the faith!"



SERVANTS OF THE SUN

Bible Study for Country Boys

WILLARD K. SPENCER

LESSON III.—A GREAT CAMP MEETING

Matt. 3:1-17

Sentence Prayer:

"Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities."

Daily Readings:

1. The Prophet in the Wilderness. Mark 1:1-8.
2. His Hearers and His Message. Luke 3:3-18.
3. His Opinion of Himself. John 1:19-28
4. His Witness to Jesus. John 1:29-37.
5. The Baptism of Jesus. Matt. 3:11-17.
6. Jesus' Praise of John. Matt. 11:7-19.
7. The Wilderness Prophet's Death. Matt. 14:1-12.

Helpful Hints:

Matt. 3:1. Jesus was "about thirty years old."—John six months older. (Luke 3:23; Luke 1:36.)