

GROW UP AND MARRY

INTERVIEW WITH RAPHAEL C. McCARTHY, S.J.

By DANIEL A. LORD, S.J.

“The chief reason why marriages fail is the fact that people just don’t grow up.” Father Raphael C. McCarthy was talking. One of the most eminent psychologists in the United States, he got his doctorate in psychology from the University of London just 25 years ago in 1925. He had previously taken a course in medicine at St. Louis University. Since then he has been head of the Department of Psychology at St. Louis University and President of Marquette University in Milwaukee and is now director of the School of Nursing at St. Louis University.

We had asked him to explain why so many modern marriages go on the rocks. We wanted him to talk less as a priest than as a psychologist. We wanted him to explain less out of his experience in counselling the hundreds of young couples who have come to him, than from a study of those psychological problems which seem to make modern marriage hesitate, trip, and fall.

Happiness and Salvation

“I am glad you want me to talk about marriage;” he said. “Certainly the whole subject of marriage is of the greatest interest to the majority of people. It should be. It was intended that most people should marry, and most people do marry.

“Happiness in marriage is often a very sure way to save one’s soul. Married people can so easily help each other to reach not only happiness, but God. So a happy marriage is a wonderful blessing. An unhappy marriage is a terrible affliction. Indeed a man and a woman may make a great success in other fields and find their success empty and uninspiring if they have to return every night to a home in which there is no peace and little understanding. One’s own home life is more important than any words can explain.

“Since we are today so interested in the State, we ought to realize that the State itself depends upon happy homes. You can’t have a solid, firm, vigorous nation unless you have pure, happy, peaceful homes in that nation.

“So any attempt that can possibly be made to bring about success in marriage is entirely on the right line. That is why the Church has been so extremely solicitous about marriage and why it safeguards marriage in every way that it can.”

Father McCarthy smiled his extremely attractive smile.

“Perhaps,” he said, “it always comes as a surprise—perhaps even with something of scandal—that a priest should set himself up as an authority on marriage. By what right does he advise about marriage? What in the world does he know about the whole matter?”

Objective Viewpoint

“These are questions that we might as well face frankly before I go on with this interview. I personally think that the priest has every right to advise on marriage. Indeed looking at marriage calmly and coolly—as he can, because he is not hampered by a subjective viewpoint—I think he can see it more clearly than can almost anyone else in the world.

“A doctor, you know, does not have to sample all his drugs in order effectively to prescribe. Certainly he does not have to have all the illnesses himself in order to know how to cure those illnesses.

“So a priest can talk about marriage without himself ever having been married and can give advice to married people about a career which he has never entered. First of all, he has years of training before he is ordained a priest. In my particular case, I had a thorough study of psychology after I became a priest. Then, through experience, a priest comes to know hundreds of couples before and after they are married. He listens to their stories and learns from them a great many practical problems and solutions beyond those which anyone could find in books of moral theology.

Marriage Today

“Certainly,” he said, smiling again, “a mature priest ought to know a great deal more about marriage than do the youngsters who rush into it with no training and no experience whatsoever.

“So I find myself talking without any embarrassment to couples who come to me for advice on marriage. I have tried to forestall the difficulties that might arise. I have tried to show them in advance what the difficulties would be; for when a person knows the difficulty, the difficulty is already largely overcome.”

Father McCarthy took a more comfortable position and continued reflectively.

“The truth about marriage today is not particularly pleasant. It has fallen into deplorable conditions. Anyone who reads or keeps his eyes open knows that there are uncounted broken homes and that these arise out of the terrible bitterness that people find in marriage and the disillusionment that often follows the honeymoon.

“Now none of these conditions,” he said, lifting a warning hand, “flow from the nature of marriage itself. They are the consequences of sheer thoughtlessness on the part of those who contract marriage. They are the failures of those who play a game and refuse to live up to the rules that govern it.

Give and Take

“Marriage is, as anyone can see, an extremely intimate affair. It makes so many demands upon the persons involved that only when the partners are temperamentally adjusted to one another is the marriage likely to be a success. If you stop to think of it, there is no other relationship in modern life that is so really close as the relationship in marriage. As a consequence beyond all other relationships it needs adjustment on the part of both the man and the woman.

“Remember: A marriage does not create character defects; it simply reveals them. It does not make people adaptable or in-adaptable. It merely gives them an opportunity to show whether or not they are capable of adapting their disposition and characters and natures. Marriage is unthinkable without constant give and take. It demands a supreme tolerance. It survives only if there is constant forgiveness. Certainly there is the need constantly to be forgiven.

“So naturally any wise man advises a couple before marriage to study one another very carefully. Is there a willingness to play the game of give and take? Is she able to check impulsiveness and thoughtlessness? Has he a high sense of duty and obligation? Or does either do things just for the fun of it?

A Change for the Better

“There are some natures that fit well together. There are some natures that despite a surface physical appeal naturally irritate each other. Marriage does not, I repeat, create dispositions: it merely reveals them. Yet young people look upon this revelation of character as if it were a complete change of character. ‘I’m so disillusioned,’ you will hear them say. ‘The person I loved changed so much after we were married.’ That is perfectly ridiculous. What happened after marriage was merely that the man or the woman displayed a disposition or a character which he or she had always had. Or—worse—after the hoodwink of romance had fallen from his eyes, the man (or the woman) suddenly saw his partner as she really was and not as wishful love had painted her. “The plain truth is that marriages, if they are to succeed, demand one kind of change—a change for the better. The marriage is a success if the person can say, ‘The one I married has changed so much that he is a vastly more attractive person than he was when I married him.’ And even here the verdict is probably not correct; for all that has happened has been that he has manifested virtues and characteristics which have made him seem more loveable and attractive. The qualities were probably always there.” Father McCarthy looked up quickly.

Success and Failure

“But I imagine that what you want to know is: What qualities make for success and what qualities make for failure? I can very easily give you the first reason for failure.

“People just do not grow up. One of the parties in the marriage remains emotionally immature. He or she goes on playing a child’s game in a state of life that demands the emotions and feelings of an adult. He wants to go on being a

child when he should have the ability to assume responsibilities and to face the realities of life. Children do not marry. They couldn't make a success of marriage. Adults who remain juvenile and adolescent, foredoom their own marriage to failure.

"It is easy to understand what we mean by maturity. It simply indicates a condition of complete development. Legally a person is mature when he has reached his full growth.

"There are several kinds of maturity. The first and simplest is physical maturity. This means that a person has reached his full physical stature. Time takes care of this without a great deal of co-operation on the part of the individual. The individual can of course violate the laws of his physical nature—eat badly, dissipate his energies, fail to get the necessary sleep, or live in unwholesome surroundings. But given even half a chance, the ordinary man and woman reach physical maturity without a great deal of effort or thoughtful planning.

"Then there is intellectual maturity. This means that the person has developed opinions. He holds these opinions with some degree of firmness. His opinions begin to have value.

"He can make a correct judgement. He has the ability to manage his own affairs."

Father McCarthy looked very thoughtful.

Emotional Maturity

"Now physical and intellectual maturity—each of these characteristics taken singly or both together—by no means guarantees emotional maturity. It is quite possible—and it often happens—that a man is six feet two, weighs 210 pounds, displays considerable intellectual ability, and yet reacts to his own personal problems exactly as a child reacts. He flies into sudden rages. He is easily hurt. He is impulsive and acts without thinking. He seems to have a distinct lack of self-control.

"I should be exaggerating if I said that only the rare individual attains emotional maturity.

"But I must say regretfully that an appalling number never really grow up as far as their emotions are concerned."

Naturally this interested us very much, so we asked Father McCarthy to continue and explain for us exactly what this emotional maturity implies. When is a person emotionally grown up? What makes an adult act like a child?

Father McCarthy proceeded to discuss all most willingly.

Degrees of Response

"A person has reached emotional maturity when he has developed the ability to manage his own emotional responses. Small difficulties do not throw him into gloom and pessimism. Small problems which would utterly perplex a child do not make him lose his peace of mind. Sudden situations do not long disturb him. He can handle emergencies with calmness and dispatch.

"Perhaps one of the clearest signs of emotional maturity in a person is his realization that there are degrees of emotional responses. Most of the time these responses should be partial. A child goes all out over every emotional experience. He stubs his toe, and he bursts into tears. He is frightened, and he falls into a complete panic. He is angry, so he breaks whatever happens to be in his hands.

"An adult is quite different. He does not waste a tremendous emotional response on some relatively trifling affair. He can feel fear without going into a complete panic. He can know the surge of anger and yet not burst into an uncontrollable rage. He can meet a new situation and be puzzled by it and yet not feel that the world has come to an end. He can be thwarted or disappointed and not burst into heartbreaking tears.

The Adolescent

"Anyone who knows youngsters knows that there are definite signs of adolescence. The adolescent is very sensitive—indeed over-sensitive—to what other people think. He is afraid of his own decisions and prefers not to make decisions. On the other hand when adults or others offer him an opinion, he regards it with suspicion and fear. He often has a kind of stubborn sulkiness and is full of quick moods which raise him to heights and drop him to depths. The tantrum characterizes the spoiled child. The quick release of emotional expressions, screams or shouts or tears or giggles, are all part of the years of immaturity.

“Now certainly an uncontrolled person, an immature person, is not likely to make a successful marriage. On the contrary the fact a person is not grown up is the very first reason for his being sure that he cannot make a good marriage. Marriage is an adventure that is meant for adults. It is a success between people who have mature, developed, or controlled characteristics.

“People must realize that success in marriage, happiness after the wedding, is not an accident. It is a positive achievement worked out by two people. It is a union of two mature personalities, each of which has a full development and each of which must manifest discipline and self-control. If there is a lack of development and a lack of control, there is much fault, and the consequences are jar ,and conflict, and rub, and irritation, and annoyance. The marriage is not likely to be a success if the people behave with the emotional instability that characterizes children and adolescents.”

Selfishness

Father McCarthy paused for a minute, as if searching for exactly what he wanted to say.

“All this may still be a little vague,” he said. “So let’s take the two outstanding emotional instabilities. Let’s see those big offenders. Let’s look at those signs of emotional immaturity that are most likely to wreck a modern marriage.”

We settled back, prepared to listen intently for what we regarded as the heart of our interview.

“The great, common, outstanding manifestation that a man has not grown up or that a woman is still a child is plain selfishness.

“When you stop to think of it, the very first lesson that every person has to learn is the lesson of unselfishness. Of course it is difficult to learn. Of course we spend a lifetime practising unselfishness. But for a successful marriage unselfishness is absolutely essential. A child is by nature selfish. That is as it must be. All his interests are centred in himself. In the words of the old song, he wants what he wants when he wants it. The world outside of him appeals to him not at all except in so far as it ministers to his self-satisfaction. The child never gives a thought to the comfort or convenience of others. He is quite untroubled by their problems or their pains.

“Nature has arranged it that way, and adults accept this fact. We are moved by the child’s helplessness. The very fact that he cannot take care of himself invites the rest of us to serve him willingly.

Childish Tricks

“But even the infant is a human being. He soon learns that people are waiting on him. He learns that by little tricks he can impose upon them. When he is in pain or hungry or when he wishes to have his position changed, he instinctively cries. He finds out that when he cries adults rush to his assistance. He does not as yet know the connection between his tears and the immediate service that he gets. He knows only that when he cries he gets service, and he soon learns that tears are an easy way to browbeat his elders into dancing attention upon him. So when he is uncomfortable, he cries; and almost immediately the adults make him comfortable. This is quite too simple, so he repeats the process. He cries when he wants something. He cries when he is hungry or in pain. But he cries when he just wants attention. Sometimes we think that he cries merely because he notices that the adults are peaceful and contented and he has found the perfect way to disturb this peace.

Parents’ Failure

“Now this way of meeting an emergency and getting what one wants is fine for children. We accept it in them. It is after all the child’s only weapon and his one effective appeal.

“Naturally however this can’t go on. The child can’t continue to cry all his life. He can’t constantly think of himself and never of others. He has to realize that the comfort and convenience of those around him must also be considered.

“So a child in a well-regulated family is soon taught to control his tears. He is trained to subordinate his desires to the rights and conveniences of others. He learn to fit his life into the family pattern. He is taught that he cannot always have his own way in a house where there are many other people in addition to himself. Certainly all the services of the

household cannot be placed at his disposal.

“Naturally the child does not want to give up his easy tears and his swift way of exercising power over others. Yet he has to relinquish these weapons. Hence it is the job of the parents to teach him consideration for others and the beginnings of unselfishness.

“Many parents fail their children badly in this regard. They accede to the child’s unreasonable demands, and the child soon finds that his parents actually reward his annoying or irritating conduct. He cries long and loud, and he gets what he wants. He stiffens, holds his breath, and gets red in the face until the frightened mother yields, picks him up, holds him against her breast, walks the floor with him, and gives him the attention that he wanted. So the next time he desires something, he lets out another healthy bellow. The next time he has some ungratified whim, he proceeds to frighten his young mother once more almost to death.

Intelligent Parents

“In the same way a child will fly into a rage when he meets with some opposition. He will fling himself down on the floor, beat the rug with his heels, and yell and scream at the top of his lungs. Instead of being punished for this, he finds his doting and badly instructed parent immediately giving in and granting him whatever he wished. He is being rewarded for his badness and is being given favours in return for a display of emotional fireworks. What the parents have done is encourage his selfish conduct. They have built up in him a conviction that if he misbehaves long enough he can get anything that he wants.

“On the other hand wise parents teach their children to conquer their selfishness. Wise parents early set about to break selfish habits. They do not immediately rush to the child who cries. They do not tolerate displays of selfish rage. They do not encourage the child in his manifestation of bad disposition. Almost at once they start to correct selfish habits, hard as these are to break. For they know that the whole question of peaceful living or of constant conflict with others depends upon the way that the child is taught self-conquest and self-discipline.

“The easiest and earliest possible thing is to develop a selfish attitude. Any careless parent can achieve this for a child. Any careless parent can encourage a child in his egocentric attitude. But what a handicap this is to the child’s success in life, to the happiness of his marriage, and to the whole question of peaceful living.

Painful Learning

“Let’s take the case of the spoiled baby who becomes the petted child. He won’t always be surrounded by the slavish attention of his parents. Soon in a new atmosphere he must meet new companions. These other youngsters are not going to give in to his whims. They are utterly unimpressed by his tears. His rages they find merely funny or annoying. So when the normal processes by which he used to get what he wanted now fail him, he reacts in intense irritation. He strikes out at his companions, struggles against them, insists on his selfish whims, and in most instances loses. He finds he does not make friends. Children do not like him. Yet he continues to struggle. His emotional outbursts worked with his parents; he believes he will make them work with his new companions.

“What his selfishness has done has been to plunge him into an endless struggle. He has not learned the principle of give and take: If he expects consideration for himself, he has to show consideration for others. He has to make reasonable sacrifices of himself if he is to live at peace with others. Ultimately any advantage for himself depends on his winning friends, making them like him, manifesting a degree of concern for their interests, and wanting to make them happy.

“As you can see, the principles of unselfishness cannot be taught in six easy lessons. They are learned often painfully. But sad and unhappy is the adult who has never learned them at all.

“Now let’s take the case of the child who has never learned to subordinate his will to the common good. He always sets his rights above the legitimate rights of others. He may come from a very good home and yet be emotionally untrained. He may be physically and mentally highly developed and yet be utterly spoiled.

“When children of this type come to marry, they carry into marriage a handicap that is almost impossible to overcome. Marriage is a co-operative concern, a fifty-fifty partnership. It is a venture that involves equal rights and equal duties. The obligations and privileges must be made to harmonize for the purpose of attaining a common goal.

One person cannot do all the taking and the other all the giving. One cannot make all the concessions and the other none of the concessions.

The Other's Good

“And yet there are thousands of marriages that are doomed to unhappiness. They are made by men and women who live entirely for themselves, judge their partner in marriage on one sole basis: ‘How far does he (or she) contribute to my personal happiness? How far is he (or she) willing to set aside his (or her) own desires in order to satisfy my personal whims?’

“Oh of course love is essential for successful marriage. But love implies altruism, the strong and effective desire to make someone else happy. Love demands a willingness to seek first the good of the other. It is not love at all unless it is willing to make sacrifices—and make them frequently.

“Now selfishness these days does not take the form of wife-beating. Selfishness is not always so obvious as nagging. Sometimes it is not crude or blatant. It does not need to be. The small stone in the shoe can cause pain and do damage. The great irritations in married life may be few. But the constant pain of small irritations, the necessity to live with a person who is constantly, even though moderately, selfish—this is what wrecks marriages. Strangely enough a thoroughly selfish person may be not notably selfish in business. He may show little signs of selfishness with the people that he meets just for a brief time. Sometimes very selfish people will, in their desire to impress others, manifest outside their own homes a remarkable unselfishness of attitude.

The Man Observes . . .

“But let a person live long with another person; let them feel the release which comes through the intimacy of marriage, and all the circumstances are there to manifest the selfishness which is the heart of their nature.

“So a prudent young man will slowly and carefully study the lady whom he intends to make his partner in marriage. He will watch to see how she acts with others. Much more important to observe is her conduct with her relatives than with strangers. Many a person is extremely pleasant to strangers and yet in his selfishness is hideously unpleasant to those of his own blood.”

The Girl Observes . . .

Father McCarthy was speaking now with great emphasis.

“I strongly advise girls to be very slow about picking out the young men they want to marry. A girl ought to watch for every sign of selfishness. She ought to watch especially for those small signs that are the real give-away.

“For instance . . . If he stays in his car when he comes to call for her and summons her by honking his horn, that is a selfish gesture. If she finds that he is constantly hinting how irresistible he is to women, and if he boasts of the number of women who have fallen for him, he is crassly conceited and hence a crassly selfish young man. She should beware of him if any criticism makes him sulky and if he resents her not responding always and immediately to his suggestions. He is selfish if he is annoyed when she asks some small favour for her family, some small consideration to be shown the things that her mother or father likes done around the house. She might even watch to see whether he takes the most comfortable chair in the living room. Does he always insist on doing what he wants to do whether or not she likes it? For example, do they always spend the evening at the kind of entertainment that he enjoys? Does he push aside with no consideration whatsoever the type of amusement she likes?

The Little Irritations

“Anyone can see that these signs of selfishness are really very trivial. They are no more trivial however than the symptoms of a disease; they are the symptoms of that selfishness which makes marriage unhappy and often intolerable.

“Don't think for a moment that selfishness is merely a male vice. Girls have their own special forms of selfishness, and they are many.

“So since many marriages are spoiled by the selfishness of the wife, the prospective husband should carefully

watch the girl for signs of this thoughtless selfishness. Many a woman, as we well know, takes it for granted that her husband should manifest a great deal of thoughtfulness for her. He should be generous with his gifts. He should show every consideration for her every wish. Quite right. But what is to be said for the woman who accepts these gifts without gratitude, who takes her husband's virtues for granted, who acts as if his courtesies were entirely her due?

"Often enough the husband turns out to be the quite forgotten man.

"Husbands often manifest a magnificent loyalty and unselfishness in many cases. They are kind in word and generous in conduct. But that unselfishness will not continue after the husband finds that he is getting very little in return from his wife or from his children, whom his wife has trained to regard their father as a perpetual Santa Claus.

Checking . . . Courtship and Marriage

"Therefore I advise any young man to make a careful study of the girl he wants to marry and a keen analysis of her character. Is she cheerful? Has she a happy disposition? Is she considerate and thoughtful when she deals with others? Does she see the good in other people, or does she see only—and always—their mistakes and blemishes? If he is generous, does he find her taking advantage of his generosity? Is she willing on occasions to do things his way and to accede to his wishes and desires? When there is something that he wants to do or when he expresses a particular wish, does she turn on him and charge him with selfishness? Indeed is she always charging other people with selfishness?

"Important as it is for people to check each other's qualities before marriage, such checking should not stop with marriage. The wise married couple will constantly check themselves. They have to find out how far they are developing either personal selfishness or selflessness. Are they manifesting after marriage habits of real childishness?

The Spoiled Child

"All this care is particularly important in the matter of any only child. An only child has twenty per cent. less chance of being happy in marriage than has one who has brothers and sisters. You see, an only child runs a real danger of being spoiled, and any spoiled child becomes an adult who is hard to get along with.

"But—and for obvious reasons—if a young man has had too many sisters, he may turn out to be a less satisfactory husband. A large family of sisters is likely to spoil the only boy. He may get into the habit of expecting to be waited on; indeed he may grow very impatient with his one wife's failure to take care of all the details of his comfort which formerly had been handled by a bevy of sisters.

"But coming back to the only child . . . I am only stressing the obvious when I say that an only child is likely to have a very exaggerated idea of his own importance. He sees himself as the centre of life in his home. He has had the undivided attention of his father and mother. This he takes for granted; in fact he expects it, and later on he may come to demand it."

Dependence

Father McCarthy now made a transition which, we could see, was inspired by what he had been talking about.

"That subject of an only child brings me to the second manifestation of emotional immaturity. There is that holdover from childhood by which a person retains a childish dependence upon his parents.

"In the normal process of development a person's feelings should be widely distributed. An infant concentrates on his mother, and this is perfectly natural. Even when he grows a little older, he sets her apart and regards her with a very special love.

"But this quite intelligible love of childhood cannot remain focussed on one person. It should reach out as the child grows older, toward playmates, associates, other members of the family. Yet you will find cases where the love does remain fixed upon the mother. The child is encouraged to love her and her alone. He finds that life is very comfortable if he is constantly in her company. So the child, who was meant to include in his affection a number of people, reserves his affection for his mother, the sole object of his devotion.

"A child of this type grown to physical maturity is very likely to make an unsuccessful marriage. He cannot switch his love from his mother to his wife. Even after marriage he clings to his mother. During the days when he is planning for marriage, he is thinking of his mother rather than of the girl he intends to marry.

“Putting it flatly and frankly, I should say that such a young man or such a young girl simply has not grown up.

“Often enough it is the mothers who are to blame for this situation. They seize avidly upon the love of their children. Especially will this happen in cases where the mother has lost her husband or where the husband does not show the affection that the wife would like to have. Then the mother turns to the child and clings to him or her with passionate intensity. She builds a wall around the child, making him the object of abnormal solicitude.

Mother Image

“Needless to say, this is extremely harmful for any child. It makes him oversensitive. His mother never criticizes him, so he is furious when others criticize him—or he is hurt or crushed. She has never seen any fault in him, and consequently she has never given him any of that discipline which is necessary for self-control and for any type of successful marriage.

“The mother’s constant attention has developed in the child an exalted sense of his own importance. He loves his mother because she has been so good to him. He is afraid that no one else could ever be so good to him, so he withholds his love from others. Then when he grows to manhood, that love which nature had meant him to transfer to or at least share with his wife remains concentrated upon his mother.

“Many children of this type never marry at all. The boy will continue to wait for some ideal woman who never comes along. For he constantly compares all women with his mother, and he never finds a woman who matches the qualities he has known in her.

“Many boys of this type marry women older than themselves. You will notice that the woman that such a man eventually picks out is very much like his own mother. His wife is never quite a wife; she is rather like a mother image.

“Toward his wife a man of this type will feel that reverent attitude which he felt toward his mother; such reverence is a very different thing from the love which he should feel for his wife.

Comparing

“Constantly in his own mind and often in outward speech he compares his wife with his mother, contrasting their cooking, their housekeeping, their ways of dressing, their friends. You see, the mother-in-law problem can become a very acute one. It can have a real basis in the bad training of a child.

“Now the tragedy of all this is that his comparison of his wife and his mother is usually not based on truth. He has an ideal picture of the doting woman who lavished her affection upon him; he compares his wife, not with a real woman, but with the dream woman who made life so luxurious for him.

“After he is married, he seems to forget that he married a young woman of his own age; he regrets that he did not marry someone of the maturity and full development of his mother. So he fails to give his wife time and opportunity to become the experienced cook and housekeeper that his mother was as long as he had known her. He finds that his wife is losing glamour in his eyes simply because she is not in everything that she does or says or thinks an exact duplicate of his mother.”

Father McCarthy raised his hand to ward off a possible objection.

Excessive Love

“Please do not think that I am in any way belittling family affection. Any child is lucky to have a happy home environment. But that home should not be allowed to interfere with the happiness of the home that he establishes after his marriage. The beautiful thing which is his love for his mother should not degenerate into a stupid dependence and a romantic idealization, which make the realities of married life intolerable.

“A mother often hates to see her baby grow up. She resents the friendships which he establishes with strangers. She tries to prevent the boy from turning in affection toward other people. In fact she seems to find it almost impossible gracefully to step aside or even in a limited degree to share her son with the normal friends he should be making.

“This excessive love of a mother so handicaps the child that only with great difficulty does he become adult.

“In the same way a person who has been too sheltered from temptation and from life’s difficulties may turn out to

be a very unsatisfactory husband or wife. He has never learned to stand on his own feet. He has not been taught to make a decision and then to take the consequences that follow once the decision has been made. A mother's brooding love has kept temptation far from him. It has shielded him in every trial. It has forestalled his decisions; it has made decisions for him.

Unnatural Protection

"Of course I can understand why mothers want to protect their children. Naturally they want to shelter them against the problems of childhood. But there may be in this maternal attitude a deep parental selfishness. We have all known parents who actually develop situations to keep a child with them or dependent upon them. They have made the child unfit to face life. What they have done by this is create disgruntled old bachelors and sour 'old maids', who should have married had they not been so carefully sheltered in their parental home that they were unable to leave the nest and make lives of their own.

"Parents of this type discourage friendships. They ridicule the suitor who comes to the house or scoff at the girl in whom the son is interested. They indicate very clearly that friends are not wanted; and when friends do come to the house, they are soon made to feel that they are not welcome. These parents cut down the normal social life of their children and insist that the children should be entirely satisfied with the company of their mother and father. Often the mother will provide a social life which is so very satisfactory that it eliminates the desire for any other social life. Ultimately it stunts the child's ability to deal with people or to enter the normal life that an adult should lead.

"Of course such procedure is rank injustice. It is a stupid thwarting of children, especially of adolescent children, by keeping them completely dependent.

"This type of child is likely to remain a dependent child all his life. Children who have been spoiled in this way never become adults emotionally.

Guidance Toward Adulthood

"All their life they remain stunted and thwarted, and in marriage they are likely to be sad and often misunderstood failures.

"Undoubtedly parents must and should protect their children. But in childhood and later in adolescence the children should be given plenty of opportunity to decide for themselves. They should be encouraged to choose their own clothes, to select their own friends and amusements. They should be cut away from regimentation and taught early to act like adults.

"Otherwise they are without preparation catapulted into those conditions of life which surround adulthood. They are plunged into a marriage for which they are utterly unfitted. They are doomed to unhappiness.

Adolescence Versus Adulthood

"Adolescence might be defined as that period during which a child is made over into an adult. This means that the period should be characterized by definite traits. An adolescent should have a wide interest in young people. He should fall in love easily—and perhaps often. There is no particular reason why the boy or the girl during the period of adolescence between fourteen and seventeen should be interested in any one particular person for any length of time. He is supposed to have a variety of friends and to like them all with considerable intensity.

"But later on, when he or she reaches maturity, the boy or the girl, now a young man or a young woman, is expected to concentrate on one person. He or she is to fall seriously in love, settle down, feel satisfied, and marry.

"It is the characteristic of the younger adolescent boy that he is interested in girls as girls and not in any particular girl. In the same way the adolescent girl is interested in boys as boys and not in some particular boy.

"But there is something extremely unwholesome in this attitude if it continues into adult years. The adult has not become emotionally mature if he finds himself incapable of concentrating on one person. There are men and women who find that one person does not satisfy or exhaust their powers of affection. They continue an adolescent interest in a great many people. They fall in love easily and frequently. They are simply adolescents no matter what their years,"

Interdependence

Again Father McCarthy switched his subject slightly.

“Inside of marriage the question of interdependence is important. When I talked about parents’ training their children to a degree of independence, I meant it very seriously. But it is not abnormal that a woman should be somewhat more dependent than a man. Only recently have women been thrown into competitive life. Even this has not meant that they have reached a degree of independence that characterizes and should characterize a man.

“But a really dependent man makes a bad husband. He is a trial to himself and a disappointment to his wife. He goes around consulting anyone who will listen to him or will show any willingness to give him advice. His wife finds that he is influenced by the last opinion that he has heard. He seems almost incapable of taking an objective viewpoint and making an objective decision.

“This emotional lack makes it very difficult for him to manage successfully the matters that will arise in his married life.

Dominance

“Women of the clinging-vine type are not always objectionable. In fact they might be quite charming. But in these days when two people marry, they should be regarded as equals. They should learn to share their problems and divide their labours. I should suggest for instance that it is the wise policy for the man to handle the business matters and for the women to administer the home.

“But if one of the partners is going to be dominant, that dominant one should be the man. Statistics show that the homes in which the woman is dominant are only forty-seven per cent happy. Homes where the man is the dominant element are sixty per cent. happy. But for real happiness there should be a partnership and no particular dominance of either the husband or the wife. A marriage of this last type is likely to be eighty per cent. successful and happy.

“So the best advice that I could possibly give to those who are about to be married is the advice to grow up first. This means the elimination of major selfishness on the part of both the men and the women. It means the careful avoidance of either a man or a woman who shows by his or her conduct an unwholesome dependence upon a mother.”
