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Buy him a stick for Christmas

STICKS are out of fashion. I am very sorry about it. Man is primarily a manual worker and he likes to be doing something with his hands. There never was a better solution to the difficulty than to give a man a stick. A woman likes her knitting needles—a boy likes his penknife, but give a man a stick. Look at the number of things he can do with a stick. He can walk with it, he can strut with it, twiddle it he can tuck it under his left arm and imagine himself a Sergeant Major. He can walk in keeping with it, giving it a gentle twirl to show he is in good humour, or he can push himself along with it in a mood of depression. If he meets someone, he can stand at ease, striking a gentle leaning posture characteristic of the Baroque Saints on the Colonnade of St. Peter's.

A stick is a most gracious companion. With a stick a man is armed to the teeth, he is ready for all comers. On the other hand, look at the poor lads who have never learned to use a stick. They fiddle round with cigarettes, tapping them on their knuckles, putting them to their mouths and taking them out again, flicking the ash about until you wonder what they are going to do next.

It must be the right kind of stick, of course. None of those gold mounted abominations. Silver is the only proper ornamentation for a stick, and not too much silver at that. There are hundreds of sticks. The Irish blackthorn, is, of course, famous. I would like to see the Liverpool spiv who would be impudent

in face of an Irish blackthorn. For second place, I would vote in favour of the good old ash plant—the boon companion of cattle drovers all over Ireland. Then there comes the cherry stick, but this is found only in fruit areas, and, of course, the chestnut. I have seen very few genuine chestnut sticks. Down here in Kent they grow chestnut for spiles, in other words, for fencing.

I knew a man once who had an idea. He bought a small holding of only four acres, and not good ground at that. He was an intelligent man and he was not a farmer. So he used his little freehold as a weekend retreat and began to think out what he would do with his four acres. He decided to leave one acre for vegetables, another acre was no good so he had to leave it. He put down one acre in ash saplings and the one acre in blackthorn. Of course it takes a long time for a crop like that to come into production, so he spaced it out in little plots that matured year by year. I think it took him ten years before he got his first ash plants and a little longer before he could get the thorn. He evolved in his own mind a special philosophy about sticks. The blackthorn must not have a crook on it, but ash plants must have a crook. Consequently a different kind of root was desired. In the end he developed a know-how in the preparation of sticks. He developed an export trade with America and his little four acres gave him a return greater than his profession. His work became his hobby.

I was obsessed in the craftsmanship of the work. I never understood before that

sticks could be boiled and turned and the crooked ways made straight; that they had to be treated with all the delicacy of a surgeon; that each stick had its own particular personality. That with some sticks you definitely had, as it were, to sit back and consider the very best method of treatment. It was like creating something new out of something that was just raw material. Then sticks had to be mounted in silver and in gold, with iron ferrules and with rubber ones. They had to be of a certain length, in other words, the stick had to be fitted to the man, even to the personality and temperament of the man.

To-day, not merely does he grow his own raw material, but sticks come to him to be prepared from all over the world. The Australians, the Americans and even the Mexicans send him sticks to be prepared and mounted.

That is a remarkable thing in many ways, it shows how a stick can become part of a man and how it can become an expression of his personality. However, I must not devote all my space to the subject of sticks. But, in conclusion, did you know that sticks are put up the chimney like hams to be smoked? That you must not use just any kind of fuel to smoke sticks. Some kinds of fuel can smoke a stick so that it stinks for ever, and leaves a smell on the hand that uses it. There are other sticks which can perfume the hand provided they have been properly prepared.



Delbridge House

I ASKED our members if they would loan me money in units of £50 to repair DELBRIDGE HOUSE. I intend to fit it up as a Hostel for pilgrims and visitors. It will be Residential and Educational. We will take in students from the Continent during the summer months. The response has been good. I have now decided to make a better job of conversion than was previously possible. We can do with a little more money if anyone has it to spare, and we will pay interest at 3%. Capital will be repaid within a year.

Learn early to apologise

IT is one of the most useful arts of life. Start off by apologising for the things that don't need an apology; go on to the things that need a little one, and work up to the big things that need a full one. Train yourself to say.

"I am sorry, please forgive me, how stupid of me not to understand."

"I am sorry for having been so uncouth and heavy handed, in the matter."

Or just say.

"I lost my temper this morning, and I am very sorry for it, I ought really to grow up, I wasn't in my usual good form."

In other words, never let the sun go down upon anger. All differences of opinion can be smoothed out by a tactful apology.

Many people apologise for being wrong even when they are quite sure that they are right. A tactful apology disarms enmity and opposition.

You try it on. After a while you will find people saying what a nice man you are. They will say.

"He is not one of those people who rides roughshod over everybody."

"Now, there's a man who realises that other people have rights as well as himself."

"He must be a nice person to live with."

"So understanding."

"A sensitive person."

"Is he married?"

In fact, you will find it rather difficult to avoid wearing a halo — but don't overdo it.

I knew a nice young man who drove a smart motor car, and on a wet day he drove through a puddle and thought he had splashed the nylons of a young lady walking on the foot path. Being a sensitive young man he stopped, raised his hat and apologised for his unpardonable conduct. She received his apology so charmingly that she enchanted him. She was in a hurry for lunch and of course he gave her a lift home. Now he is the passenger and occasionally she take him for a ride.

Men go up in the summer time and dig it out with slanes and let it dry. Then they foot it and clamp it, so that the wind blows through it. Then down it comes upon sleds to provide fuel for the winter. If there is one memory an Irishman carries with him wherever he goes it is the smell of the turf fire. You get the tang of it over every bog. These turf clamps are one of the most familiar sights in Ireland, and turf cutting and turf harvesting always partakes of something like a picnic. It is a day in the bogs. It was on the shady side of one of these black clamps of turf that Mat Baron laid himself down for the last time.

Well, the doctor came and it was decided not to have an inquest because the man had died of old age. Still dressed in his old frieze coat they laid him upon a turf sled and lined it with heather. They made a rough coffin and painted a cross on it with the red raddle used for marking sheep. Some good woman produced a crucifix instead. They opened his pack, and it was then they found the real nature of the man.

He was an old Carmelite lay-brother from one of the houses in the West of Ireland that had fallen into decay.

Finally, at the end of the penal days, the Community—a Prior and one lay-brother—had dispersed and gone upon their separate ways. In the pack they found his old habit. It was not the Third Order habit that we usually know among Ter-tiaries. It was a full and well worn old habit, greasy and a little dirty and he had carried it with him ever since he had been upon the road.

These good people knew what a religious habit was, so they stripped him of his old frieze coat and clothed him in his habit. Then, beneath the old coat they found a crucifix on a long chain. Some-one noticed that behind the body on the cross was a paper. A paper wrapped in oiled silk, and on it was written Mat Baron's Vow:—

“To walk Thy roads until I die,
in hunger, cold and sunshine
To see Thy cross on every hill,
in the branches of every tree
To see Thy blood upon the stones,
of every lane and roadway
And bring my soul to God above,
by my Lady's Rosary.”

A Carmelite had gone back to the hermit's life and had ended his journey like Paul the Hermit.

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Parade

The 'Plane' Fact

There is the story of a man who lived on an island and his only communication with the mainland was by plane. He called in to the priest on the mainland to make his Easter duty and the priest said to him, “Now, can't you come to confession and communion more often than once a year.” “But, Father,” said the man, “the only way I can get over is by plane.” “Well,” said the priest, “what is the trouble about that?” The man, “It is too expensive for venial sin, and too risky for mortal!”

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Indignant Cabby

An American was being shown round Belfast by a local cabby and they passed

a statue of a very noble looking gent on a prancing charger. The cabby said, “That is King Billie of pious and immortal memory.” The Yank said, “Never heard of him.” Then they came to the Belfast City Hall which is one of the noblest buildings in the North of Ireland. The cabby said, “That there is a cannon that we captured at the Battle of the Boyne.” The Yank said, “Never heard of it!” “Gawd man,” said the cabby, “don't you *ever* read your Bible?”

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Studying Form

A Dublin bookie and his clerk were sitting in the office waiting for the little bird that brings news, when the telephone rang to say that racing was off for the day. The bookie looked at the clerk and the clerk looked at the bookie, and both had the same thought—there was no use

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brains out." Another man argued he could not eat ham because of his religion. It did no good. He ate ham.

After an hour the police arrived. The bandit stuck his gun into the counter man's back and muttered: "Tell 'em a good story." The man said there had been a brawl but it was over. When the gunman finally left, £25 was missing from the cash register and 30 customers sat stuffed with £15 worth of ham and eggs. Hours later, the police arrested William Kampf, aged 22. "I had a few drinks and thought I would have a little fun," he was quoted as saying.

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Retort Courageous!

Naval officers are talking of the signal made by the captain of Diamond after

the collision with the cruiser Swiftsure, which was the subject of a court-martial.

As Swiftsure, hit bows on, went astern, the Admiral signalled: "What do you intend to do now?" The reply from Diamond's captain at this catastrophic moment in his career was I understand, "Buy a farm!"

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Christmas Cards

We have six designs in black and white or colour, by Eileen Rivers. She is an Irish artist and her work is really good. The trouble is that they are wood-cuts and we cannot take too many impressions from the blocks. If you hurry up and write you may be in time to get a few—price, 2d each.

Our Burses

	<i>Already acknowledged.</i>		<i>Increase.</i>
The St. Jude Burse No. 2 ...	£475 19 2	now	£777 8 2
Holy Child of Prague Burse ...	325 15 3		407 7 3
The Holy Face Burse ...	126 13 2		136 13 2
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Burse ...	158 4 6		188 4 6
Little Flower Burse ...	56 15 0		166 15 0
St. Anne Burse ...	17 13 6		28 13 6
St. Anthony Burse ...	42 13 6		82 13 6
St. Martha Burse ...	853 10 6		855 10 6
Sacred Heart Burse ...	344 11 0		358 11 0
St. Philomena Burse ...	—		—

A Happy Christmas

It is not too early to wish you a Happy Christmas. May the Blessings of the Holy Season come down on you from the Holy Child as you kneel at the Manger.

Thank you for having been so good to us during the year.

Our Lady keep you! Yours in Carmel

M. E. Lynch O.C.