

March 19, 1924.

The Flareback.

"Dear Father:

"Some parts of Monday's Supplement made me angry, and some parts seemed unfair. I may be wrong, and I hope I am, because one paragraph in the Bulletin opened my eyes to the fact that I have been wrong, very wrong, and that by a carefully designed self-deception, I have been walking ~~at~~ ^{strait} into a trap of the devil.

"Your reference to my mother woke me up. I say my mother, because it meant just that to me. I know exactly what my mother would do if she saw that book and knew that I was trying to excuse myself for having read it.

"In less than five minutes with an instinct that I wish I had, she would have discovered just what was wrong with it, and would have made a bee-line to the furnace. She would then have sprinkled the furnace with holy water and gone ~~at~~ ^{strait} to her Sacred Heart statue to pray for the salvation of my soul.

"She would not cry. I know her. She might spend the night on her knees, but she would not cry or plead with me. The next morning she would start three Novenas for me -- one to St. Patrick for faith, one to St. Joseph for purity, and one to St. Rita, 'Saint of the impossible,' for sense -- all for me!

"I've made a pretty complete ass of myself, and I might as well have it all out with you now. "I've always tried to lead a clean life and keep away from the degrading things things that I heard about. But frankly, I read the book out of morbid curiosity that I can see now was impure. I tried out first one excuse and then another. I said that I read it for style, -- but I knew down in my heart that it had no style. I said that I read it for the two chapters on the English class, but when I re-read 'Ideals of Youth' I knew that this was camouflage. I tried to justify it by saying that it taught a great moral lesson, but when my Christian conscience asked 'What lesson?' I couldn't say.

"I have to push my confession further to show what I mean. I know that it was impure curiosity because I got hold of two other books as a result of this one. One I borrowed and one I bought. I destroyed both of them before I began this letter -- and I am now writing for the fellow from whom I borrowed the one.

"Perhaps the humiliation of seeing this letter in the Bulletin (please print it for the good of my soul) will be enough to keep me from further temptation. If it isn't, I'm going to pay you a visit to declare myself. I haven't quite nerve enough to do it now, so I will sign myself

"An ex-renegade Irishman."

The Lenten Abstinence.

The Bulletin will not answer questions on the fast and abstinence. The law is clear, and Catholics who have reached the age of reason are bound under pain of mortal sin to observe the law. God will not be mocked.