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A Letter to the Old Boys.

Dear Boys:

Did your mother ever meet you at the door with a warning finger to her lips, telling you to walk softly, and, after kissing you, whispering into your ear that your brother is pretty sick? Do you remember that a little lump rose in your throat when you heard that message, and your first inquiry was whether everything possible was being done for him? You didn't feel that your mother was not glad to see you just because she received you so quietly; you felt just as she did that your sick brother was the first consideration now.

That is the way Notre Dame is receiving you today. She has her finger on her lips, to ask you to come in quietly. She tells you that one of the boys is very, very sick. She tells you that the best in medical science has been invoked to save his life, and she asks you to get down on your knees with the rest of the boys and say your beads that God will work a miracle and bring this boy back to health.

Notre Dame's sick son is James Powers, too fine a Notre Dame man to lose. He had too much grit. He tackled too hard. His neck snapped, and he is paralyzed. He lies helpless in a cast, burning with fever, racked with pain, his agony increased by the fact that his mind is particularly keen and his giant body strong. For nine days now he has fought for his life, with grit and cheerfulness and patience that mark him as a strong friend of God.

Do you remember the hush that was on the campus when George Gipp was so sick? Perhaps you belong to an earlier generation, and can recall the case of Joe Medeski. Or perhaps you go back still further and recall the last illness of Father Regan, or the Requiem Mass for Mike Powers. The feeling the boys had then is the feeling they have now; only their feeling this time is buoyed by hope that a miracle will be the answer to their prayers, as it was in the case of Van Wallace.

Perhaps you haven't heard of Van. Sixteen months to the day before Jimmie's accident, Van Wallace, who had just finished his freshman year at Notre Dame, broke his neck while diving. The doctors gave him twenty-four hours to live. He fooled them -- that day and every day since. Twelve days after the accident he reached his lowest point -- a fever of 105, and black spots all over his body. A Novena for him ended that day. He fell asleep for eight hours, and when he awoke his condition was entirely changed. The accumulated poisons began leaving his body; sensation returned here and there; gradually movement developed; and while much of the paralysis remains yet, he is far from being helpless. Prayer saved him from death, and it is gradually restoring his powers.

The boys are making a Novena for Jimmie now. They are saying the beads every day for him, and every day they are receiving Holy Communion -- thirteen hundred of them. You don't want to rob Jimmie of any of these prayers, do you? You don't want to encourage any of the boys to break their fast after midnight tonight or tomorrow night, or you will hurt Jimmie's chances. The Novena still has four days to run. What you really ought to do is to receive Holy Communion with them Saturday and Sunday, and pray with all your might that God will mend Jimmie's broken neck. That's Notre Dame spirit!

John F. O'Hara, C.S.C.

P.S. If you have a bottle in your pocket, kindly smash it over the Niles road. Your self-denial will help Jimmie, and your discretion will help Notre Dame.