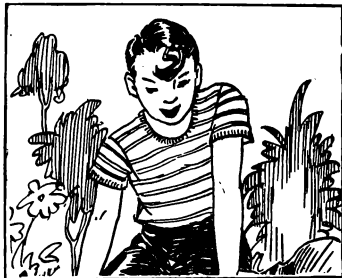


A GOOD-FOR-NOTHING MAKES GOOD

By ROBERT McAFEE *



"Perhaps I could write a story," thought Pedro.

ALL his young life Pedro had been called a worthless good-for-nothing. He had been told that so many times by his teachers that he took it seriously and actually believed it himself. Yes, Pedro really thought that he could not do anything worth while. His teachers had made it clear to him that he had passed his grades only by luck and not because he had the ability to get through.

His mother had often asked him to do something to earn a few pesos to add to the slender income of the family, but her pleadings were useless, since Pedro thought he did not have the ability to do anything. So, gradually his parents had lost all faith in him, and the boy had lost all faith in himself. Occasionally, to be sure, he got a small job doing some kind of work outside of school hours, but he always lost the job in a short time.

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"It's just no use," he would say. "I'm only a good-for-nothing, and so I can't make good."

Pedro was not a *bad* boy; he was just a worthless boy—at least he and his teachers and his parents thought so.

About the only thing Pedro really liked to do was to read stories; he enjoyed reading a good story very much. He liked to tell them, too. Sometimes at recess he would get a group of younger boys around him and would tell them something he had just read. Usually he told a story which he had read, but if none occurred to him at the moment he made up one of his own.

Pedro was a subscriber to several magazines for boys and young people. He liked to read the stories in *Boys' Life* or *THE YOUNG CITIZEN* or similar publications. He had a number of story books in his room, and often he read them instead of studying his lessons.

One night he sat in his room reading a thrilling story. Presently he finished the story. "I suppose I should work those problems assigned for tomorrow," he said to himself. "But what's the use? I couldn't get them right." So he decided to go to bed. He took off his clothing and put on his pajamas.

Pedro always said his prayers before he went to bed. On this particular night as he knelt down he happened to notice the crucifix which his mother had placed on the wall near his bed. An idea came to the boy. "Perhaps if I ask God to help me, I might not be such a worthless, good-for-nothing boy," he thought.

(Please turn to page 149.)

NIGHT IN A HUT

(Continued from page 147)

sun, and then sell it to one of the farmer's wives.

They offered us the skin, but we thanked them and declined. We could not take the skin with us because we had no means of carrying it on our motorcycle.

We cleaned the mud from our motorcycle, and waited until the hot sun had dried the road. Then we said goodbye and climbed onto our motorcycle which took us to our farm in a short time.

We were glad that we had stayed with the natives during the night, as this had given us the opportunity of seeing their home life and enjoying their hospitality. But one night in a native hut was enough, especially when we had a visit from an East African leopard.

QUESTIONS

1. What can you tell about a leopard? (See the encyclopedia.)
2. Describe the skin of the leopard.
3. Why do the natives not wish to make holes in the leopard's hide?
4. Find Kenya Colony on the map. Mount Elgon.

A GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

(Continued from page 138)

So he added a little petition of his own to his prayer. "Help me, God, to do something worth while, so I won't be a good-for-nothing."

Just as he finished his prayer, he happened to notice the back cover of a recent magazine for young people. "Can you write a good story? Win a prize!" the advertisement read. He scanned the announcement through. "I wonder if I could," he said, half aloud. He thought for a few moments. "Well; I'll try."

He seated himself at his study table. As he did so, he again said the words of his prayer uttered a few moments before. "Help me, God, to do something worth while, so I won't be a good-for-nothing."

Inspiration and strength come to the boy. Soon he was working away on a short story to be sent in answer to the advertisement he had read. Never before had he had such an eager desire to do something worth while. He wrote and wrote. It was a simple story, and the plot unfolded naturally and easily.

"I think this is a pretty good story," Pedro thought when it was almost finished.

(Please turn to page 151.)

GOUNOD

(Continued from page 141)

dramas, Wagner. (See THE YOUNG CITIZEN for November, 1940.)

At seventy-five, crippled and blinded by a paralytic stroke, Gounod composed a *Requiem*. He heard it played, and when it was finished, he fell over unconscious and died. This was in 1893. At the funeral service hosts of his admirers were present.

Gounod's great operas *Faust*, *Romeo and Juliette*, and many of his sacred compositions will always be heard and loved whenever there is music.

REVIEW

1. What is Gounod called?
2. What is his nationality?
3. What are the dates of his life?
4. What is Gounod's most famous opera?
5. Tell of the success of this opera.
6. What is an opera?
7. Name some selections from *Faust*.
8. Name some other compositions by Gounod.
9. Tell of the disposition of Gounod.
11. Name one contemporary.
12. What was Gounod's last composition?

A GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

(Continued from page 149)

Presently it was completed. The boy read it over carefully, changing a sentence here and there, or looking up a doubtful spelling in the dictionary.

"When the story was written to his satisfaction, he placed it in the drawer of his study table. "Tomorrow night I will copy it and send it in," he said to himself. Then he went to bed.

The next morning Pedro read his story before breakfast. "It is really a good story—better than I thought," he decided. However, he felt it was best to say nothing to anyone about his attempt at story-writing.

That evening he made a neat copy of his story, placed it in a large envelope, and addressed it to the editor of the magazine. "I hope I get at least a small prize," he said to himself. And then the words of his player again came to his mind. "Help me, God, to do something worth while, so I won't be a good-for-nothing."

The story was mailed at the post-office, but Pedro told no one of his literary attempt. Then things went on about as usual.

Weeks and weeks went by, and the boy heard nothing from the publishing

company. "Just like everything else I try to do—worthless!" he thought.

But one day he received a letter—a letter in a long envelope with the name of the publishing company in the upper left hand corner. He could hardly wait to open the envelope.

"Dear Pedro," the letter ran. "We congratulate you upon the manuscript which you entered in our recent contest. We are pleased to announce that your story was awarded second place. We enclose you our check for one hundred pesos, the amount offered as second prize. Your contribution will soon appear in our magazine for young people. If you care to send us more stories we will buy them from you if they are as well written as the one you sent us."

Pedro could hardly believe his eyes. One hundred pesos! He showed his letter to his parents and teachers. They were as astonished as he was.

They all thought a miracle had happened. And indeed it had, for after that nobody could persuade Pedro that he was a good-for-nothing. He knew now that he *could* do something worth while—he was a successful writer!

"A good-for-nothing makes good," said Pedro to

himself. And from that time he was a changed boy.

ANSWER THESE

1. Did you like this story? Why?
2. What did Pedro's parents and teachers think about him?
3. What did Pedro think about himself?
4. Was this true?
5. What did Pedro like to do?
6. What changed Pedro's opinion of himself?
7. What did Pedro need in order to "make good"?
8. Do you ever doubt your own ability?
9. Do you think you would be more successful in doing things if you tried harder?
10. Is there any person who is really good for nothing? Why do you think so?
11. Have you ever heard of an "inferiority complex"?
12. What is an "inferiority complex"? (It is the feeling in a person that he is unable to do anything—the feeling that he is good for nothing.)
13. Is it possible to develop an "inferiority complex" within yourself? (Yes)
14. It is possible to destroy an "inferiority complex" when you have developed such a feeling? (Yes) How?