

Nicanor

By Salvador B. Espinas

NICANOR was eight years old, a second grade pupil in Miss Mapa's class. He was very irregular in his attendance and negligent of most of the school work assigned him by his teacher. As a result he was very poor in his class — and indeed a problem child.

Since the opening of classes in June Miss Mapa had been encouraging him to study his lessons and to attend class regularly. Seldom was Nicanor present the whole of a school week, and only twice or thrice since June was a given assignment fully accomplished by him. She had tried every remedial measure she could think of but her every effort held no promise. How could she make him better? It was almost late December and the school year was more than halfway through.

"Why were you absent again this morning?" Miss Mapa asked.

"I did not wake up early, Miss Mapa," Nicanor answered evading Miss Mapa's questioning eyes.

"Why?" Miss Mapa inquired kindly.

"I played SAN PEDRO with my friends so I went to bed very late," he answered truthfully.

"You should not play late at night, Nicanor. A good boy goes to bed early and wakes up early. 'For early to bed and early to rise,' 'Tis the way to be healthy and wealthy and wise'. Do you remember that rhyme?"

"Yes, Miss Mapa," Nicanor answered meekly.

"Now, join your friends and play. It is still very early."

"Thank you, Miss Mapa," Nicanor said as he joined his friends who were playing outside.

Miss Mapa followed him with her eyes and said to herself "Nicanor is not really a bad boy. He is honest, polite, playful, healthy—but he is too lazy to come to school everyday. He neglects his lessons. What makes him so? What wrong have I done? What can I do?"

The next day Nicanor was absent again.

"Did you see Nicanor this morning?" Miss Mapa inquired of Rita who was Nicanor's neighbor.

"He went to the river early with his younger brother to take a bath. When the school bell rang they were not home yet," Rita reported.

That Christmas vacation Nicanor occupied most of Miss Mapa's thoughts. She read and reread books on the psychology of children, how to deal with problem children, growing children, etc. At last she found what she wanted. It was something great, a discovery that might change Nicanor who had gone astray from her flock. She would try it; she was most determined when she entered her class the first day after the Christmas vacation.

Nicanor and some children were in the room sitting when Miss Mapa came. "Good morning, children."

"Good morning, Miss Mapa," the children chorused. One of them was Nicanor.

Miss Mapa was very glad to see Nicanor in school. She could apply the remedial measure she had found—and how victorious she felt at the moment! Of course she needed much care in making her initial approach. Nicanor, she understood, needed sympathy most. He needed recognition of the good qualities that he possessed which were dimmed by his irregularity and his laziness. Any boy cannot be altogether bad.

"Children, this is the first school day of the new year. Let us all start the year in the right way. Let us promise to be always good and do good." Miss Mapa told the children with sincerity in her tone. "Will you promise, children?"

"Yes, Miss Mapa," the children chorused.

"Now, children, can you tell me what promises you can keep that will make you good children?"

Everyone's hand was in the air. Nicanor, Miss Mapa observed, also raised his hand, but very shyly.

"Nicanor, what promise can you make?" Miss Mapa called on him gently.

"I will be a good boy!" Nicanor almost shouted without hesitation.

"Very good, Nicanor, but what is it that you must promise in order to become a good boy?"

Nicanor had nothing more to say so Rita volun-

teered to help him. "I will come to school every day."

"Very good, Rita," the teacher said as she wrote it on the board.

"I will study my lessons every day," it was from Dina. The teacher wrote it too on the board.

"How many promises do we have now on the board, children?"

"Two," the children chorused.

"Will you read them to us, Nicanor?" Miss Mapa called on Nicanor who was raising his hand.

Nicanor read the promises very carefully.

"Very good, Nicanor. I hope everyone keeps those two promises," the teacher said smiling.

"We have more promises to make, Miss Mapa," a group of children stood up to contribute more.

"Keep them children, because I will let you write them neatly on a piece of paper now. Add them to these two on the board. I will give a pad of paper and a new pencil as prize to the one who writes the best promises. Write them very neatly."

"Yes, Miss Mapa," the children said in unison. Then each child copied the two promises and added

more promises to them.

When the bell rang for dismissal, everyone handed in his paper. The teacher told them that she would announce the winner in the afternoon, and reminded them of the pad and pencil she would give to the winner.

Every one was in school very early that afternoon. Nicanor was the earliest bird. He was already in the room when the children came.

"Who is the winner, Miss Mapa?" Everyone wanted to know.

When the bell rang and everyone was seated, Miss Mapa said very gently, "I am very proud to announce that Nicanor made the best promises. They were written very neatly." Then she gave him the pad of paper and the new pencil wrapped in a beautifully colored paper, and all the children clapped their hands for him.

"Thank you, Miss Mapa," Nicanor said as he retreated toward his seat, holding the prize proudly, with a smile on his lips.

Miss Mapa smiled at the boy feeling very much relieved. Then she looked out of the window with tears of joy in her eyes.



The issues and events that worry and shame us today will pass away, but the public school system must not. — *Don E. Blackmon in Journal of Arkansas Education.*

The Study of Children

It's foolish to worry about confused, miserable teenagers. Give them a few years and they'll turn out to be normal, miserable adults. — *John Harold in Midland Schools.*

Six-year-old Bobby's first report card showed excellent marks except in deportment. "Bobby", said his mother," the teacher has a note attached that says

you were a little boisterous". "Well, what did you expect", bristled Bobby. "Did you think I'd be a little girlsterous?" — *From National Parent-Teacher.*

The children in the first grade were discussing the many products the milkman delivers to our homes. They had mentioned milk, chocolate milk, cream, and buttermilk. Then little Carole waved her hand. "At our house", she said proudly, he also leave "cabbage cheese". — *Dorothy Takacs in The Instructor.*

Children need selfrespect, security, and activity as much as adults do, and these needs should be recognized in the school as well as in the home. — *Ralph Ojeman.*