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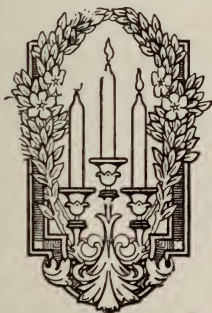
When Is It A Sin?



By MARY E. MCGILL

Company Keeping: When Is It A Sin?

By
Mary E. McGill, Editor
of "Woman's Interests,"
Our Sunday Visitor



(This little book is affectionately dedicated
to our Young Women, whose happi-
ness lies so close to my heart.)

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COMPANY KEEPING: When Is It A Sin?

Not a week-day passes without my mail bringing insistent and heart-eager queries: "Miss McGill, I am a young girl who wants to do right, but I am full of doubt as to what is permissible and what is wrong in company-keeping. . . . I simply cannot talk to my mother. She puts me off when I ask questions about love and life and will not listen to me. Or, if I ask and she listens, she grows suspicious and commences an espionage that destroys my happiness and ends our confidential chats. . . . Tell me, how many times may I kiss a boy? Or, is it all right to kiss once? And is the 'soul kiss' a sin?"

Others have learned the answer to "*When Is It A Sin?*" through blighting experiences. Such anxiously seek for help in rebuilding their broken-down resistance to the fiery impulses of youth. These anguished ones long to regain their self-respect and to

have restored to them the respect of their neighbor. Their quests for moral and social reconstruction touch my heart in a most poignant manner and bring out all the tenderness of my womanly sympathy.

Questions concerning the propriety, yes more, the safety of certain actions, more particularly, with respect to expressions of affection, spring not from exceptional cases, but are indicative of the emotional problems with which even our most virtuous girls are confronted.

Of Paramount Interest

There is no subject of such paramount interest to the average maid as the one having to do with company-keeping. The normal girl, who has not a vocation to the religious life, or to virginity in the world, devotes many hours of each week to the thought of some particular hero, who is either her prospective husband, in reality, or in wish—which is something quite different, as time will prove to her; or, she dreams of the

great Somebody, who is to come from the nebulous Somewhere, and claim her for his own.

Unless an older woman be dried-up in soul, unless her sympathies are atrophied, and her understanding dull, the wholesome and entirely legitimate ambitions of her younger sisters find responsive interest in her heart. Hence, anything that promotes the happiness or disturbs the peace of girls gains her ready hearing.

But since the heart of a good girl is sensitive, and since the virtue of the modest maiden is delicate, there are questions crowding into the imagination of these charming ones, questions originating from youth's impulsive emotions, that no human being—not even the wise director of souls in the holy Sacrament of Penance—can venture to answer with a decisive “yes” or “no”. The ambassador of Christ is often obliged to say to such: “Confess your sins honestly, as you believe them to be, and leave the determination of the full guilt to God, Who sees all things, Who knows

the motives, and Who understands the action of your will.”

When Is It a Sin?

It might be helpful to study briefly the beginnings of sin before plunging into the elusive subject of human emotions and when such emotions, and the thoughts that usually (but not always) produce these emotions, partake of the malice of sin. It is also proper to impress the truth that sin lies in the will—the *consent* to offend God—the choice of a seeming present good over a constant loyalty to God and the everlasting happiness that is the reward of such fidelity. In order to avoid nervous anxiety and scrupulosity, it is important to remember the three essential constitutes of a grievous sin, which are: A grievous matter, sufficient reflection, and a full consent of the will. It is also important for the peace of mind of the highly sensitive that they realize temptations are not sins; that the most violent emotional desires and the most pursuing evil imaginations

do not constitute sin until the will gives consent. But the caution is here entered that chastity is a delicate virtue; it may not be exposed ruthlessly to unruly human elements, nor may intruding temptations be met with a friendly tolerance. Dependent upon the nature of the temptation, the disposition of the combatant, and the surrounding circumstances, all onslaughts against purity, whether they be in thought, desire, or act, must be met decisively in two ways: either by direct repudiation or direct ignoring—a *deliberate snubbing*.

The First Reply Brief

Sin is world-old. And ever since Eve gave Adam that delicious, rosy apple plucked from the Tree of Knowledge, man has imitated the father of the human race and glibly defended himself, when caught in his sins, in the language of the first reply brief ever offered by a defendant: "The woman gave it to me to eat."

But the sin of Adam and Eve was not a sin of lust. It was a sin of dis-

obedience. Sin first found place in woman's heart through pride, desire for power, and curiosity. Pride, because the serpent told her the delectable fruit would make her like unto God; desire for power, because it is humanly pleasant to feel one has influence; and curiosity, because of her desire to penetrate the unknown and to see into the things that were hidden. And Adam sinned because he had not backbone enough to resist the seduction of the woman he loved. He really didn't want to eat that luscious, perfect fruit, because God had laid a command against such indulgence. His better judgment warned him against the imprudence; his spiritual nature, still in its original and transcendently beautiful integrity, instinctively held back from the disobedience which would offend God and defame his soul. Doubtless, too, he sensed the heavy penalty. But then, as too often now, the woman conquered not only the judgment of man, but defiled his spirit in her unholy victory.

First Sins of Youth

The first sins of youth against holy purity are often sins of curiosity—experimental adventures, fired by human concupiscence. The beautiful young girl, innocent and untarnished, stands on the edge of knowledge, tremulous and sensitively expectant. She wonders about the great secrets of the human heart and woman's marvelous power of attracting the opposite kind, which she has heard attributed to her sex. These revelations have come to her through the boastful words of her companions, or subtly from her elders, or by innuendoes. Or, perhaps she has read lurid romances and other insidious or blatant expose of natural lust, which is so foreign to spiritualized and controlled love.

The Deadliest Misinformant In Our Day

But in our day perhaps the deadliest *misinformant* as to the ways of true living is the moving picture show. The "Talkies" have increased

the danger of the Movies. The inflections of the voice and the insinuating intonations of vice give a keener edge to lust and the other depravities shown by moving pictures, since conversation has been introduced by the Talkie.

Our youth go to visit in the dens of iniquity when they sit through many of the attractions offered by these silver screen productions, for the scenes are so vivid that for all practical purposes young people had just as well be actually in the presence of men and women who are violating the holy virtue of chastity. I believe that the prevailing unclean theatrical presentations (both legitimate and vaudeville) and the indecent movies, together with the villainess of current literature, are responsible in no small measure for young folks having learned the ways of their own easy sinning.

Glamourous Surroundings

Black looks white in glamourous surroundings. Present a beautiful

home setting, or luxurious country club, or hotel background, have the men in tuxedo or strictly formal dress, and the women gorgeously gowned, with said frocks made dazzlingly conspicuous by their abbreviated sensuous appeal, and then proceed to introduce the ever-present "triangle", the indecent affairs, and all the lusts that flaunt so boldly and enticingly (for youth) on the cinema, and you have your answer for the distorted consciences of our young Catholic men and women.

The Consequences

And what is the consequence of all this? Ideals are lowered; standards are dethroned. Natural impulses are set loose to conquer the supernatural. It has become all too common—for maidens who have sprung from old Catholic strains, who have been born and reared in the faith, who have been taught that their thoughts, their desires, and their acts must be chaste; that all near occasions to sin must be avoided; that the most price-

less thing in the soul of a girl is her purity, and the noblest virtue in the young man is the preservation of his moral integrity—I say it has become common to forget these lessons of virtue, these lofty ideals, and the ways and means of conquering human temptations and natural human desires. Hence, the license that formerly only women who had neither regard for their good names nor for their soul's sanctification dared to exercise, is now usurped freely by Christian youth. It has become usual for the lad to expect payment for his social courtesies. It has come to the sad pass where young women give bribes. That is what it amounts to, at least.

Take a Look at Yourself

Turn the three-angle mirror on yourselves, girls, in the white light of God's merciful grace. See if the spiritual beacon does not reveal in searchingly accusing flashes that it has become a case of barter and sale. The man takes you to the movie, to

dinner, to a dance, to a bridge party, or, for an automobile drive, and a windup dinner of chicken and the trimmings. But you owe him no liberties for this. You make yourself as attractive as possible, which is all right and the sensible thing for you to do—if you do it with a good intention; that is, if you do it to be pleasing to your escort, to be a credit to his judgment in the selection of his friends, and to show that you respect both him and yourself by making yourself personally as *innocently* inviting as your means allow and nature has given you the power to legitimately let shine. You are not even expected to stop at this attempt to please by appearance, but you have every moral right to endeavor to be magnetically attractive in refined speech, by your womanly smile, by the virtuous light in your eyes, by the warmth of your pure heart, and by your general quiet, but gay manner—each girl according to her natural disposition, improved upon by character cultivation. Diversity

pleases diversified natures. Some men like the girl quiet and a good listener; other men like the maiden to be vivacious and a good talker to fill in the embarrassing silences occasioned by their own inadequacy of expression. And so on. There is no accounting for tastes, otherwise there would be more dissatisfied husbands in the world; i. e., if they all wanted the same type of girl and felt alike on what constitutes a pleasing personality. Of course, they all do, or *should* desire only a worthy girl for a wife.

From the Legitimate to the Sell-Out

If you will stick to your womanly last and be earnest Catholic girls, you will hold the grace of God, retain your self-respect, and enjoy the esteem of all good men. But more: you will make evil minds pause, dazzled by the chastity in your eyes, the modesty of your actions, and the maidenly reserve in your words. To refrain from the defilement of the good and

to allay lust in the hearts of men steeped in sin, will ever constitute the greatest human victory that woman can win over man. She then becomes close to the angel in appeal. And I want you to believe me, dear girls, when I tell you that is what every good man, and even evil men, find irresistibly charming in young womanhood. There is nothing so powerful as virtuous loveliness. . . . not gold, not riches, not physical beauty, not high position—no, none of these entrances as does *sinlessness*. Sinful indulgence intoxicates and drugs. It is an opiate that kills the soul and harms the body. Self-control—*purity* exalts the soul at the same time it preserves it from defilement. A clean heart is a happy heart. This happiness reflects in the clear, open eye, gives lightness to the step, buoyancy to the disposition, and a luminosity to the face. Girls, chastity imparts a peculiar beauty to the countenance. It produces a loveliness of soul that refuses to be cloaked, which is the reason why its radiance lights the

human form with beauty entirely distinct from mere natural perfection of feature and grace of body.

Be Unaffected

Under no circumstance would I have you prudish nor squeamishly apprehensive of sin. It is not my thought to remotely suggest that you look for evil. On the contrary, let your virtue, sustained by the Sacraments and prayer, become your protector from vice. Guarded by the innocence of your life and the prudent exercise of womanly modesty and dignity, meet your men friends and enjoy their companionship in a wholesome and unaffected manner. Be natural, girlish, and *sweet*. The greatest compliment a man can pay a woman is to feel so strongly and be so thoroughly imbued with her womanliness that he shows by the reverence in his eyes, by his protectiveness, and by the expansion of his heart that he senses her good character and that his finer nature exults in her sweetness. Don't misunderstand:

not cloyingly sweet, but gentle, tender, kind, and pure.

And Do Not Be Deceived by Worldly Standards

The world and those living according to Pagan standards and ideals will try to prove to you that sinful ways are natural, therefore there is no wrong in obeying certain natural impulses when they call you to indulgences which you learned even when you were children were to be denied. I refer here to the consent to any sins against the sixth and ninth commandments, whether these pulling temptations be to sins against purity in thought, desire, or act.

Do not deceive yourselves, girls, nor permit yourselves to be deceived. Impurity is not sweet, though temptation and the tempter would urge that such sin is desirable. Lust lures, but in the lure lies death. Remember in moments of temptation: *Chastity is most delicate, hence easily hurt.* So put yourselves in the care of the Blessed Mother, the Queen of Virgins

and of Angels, confess your sins often; whatever they may be, however shameful, tell them honestly and without fear, humbly and with sorrow. Be determined to live in the grace of God. Obey your confessor's warnings. Seek his advice when in doubt. Trust him. God commissioned him to be your friend and your soul's guardian. Sustain your spiritual determinations by frequent Holy Communion, which will calm turbulent thoughts and inflammable emotions. If you are thus strengthened in virtue, sweetly alluring impulses to sins against purity will turn to a terrible fear of offending God, of losing His grace, and of sacrificing the most precious adornment of womanhood—chastity.

The Answer to Your Questions

You are entitled to know something of your physiological constitution. It is both a protection to your health and to your virtue to have sufficient information concerning sex, its purpose and functions. You have

a right to this first knowledge through a chaste, reverent acquisition. Though temptation is strong, and the flesh is weak, it is my belief if the necessary, not detailed nor overly stressed, expositions of the facts of life were gradually made to the adolescent boy and girl, at the proper ages, by the mother to the daughter, and by the father to the son, and the lad and the maid were thus taught that nature, which is God's own work, is beautiful; and if its purposes with regard to matters of sex were revealed in a way that made them understandable in the light of eternity, the modern world would have fewer sad situations to face, not so many broken lives, darkened souls, and anguished hearts. But, this information, while important, will be insufficient for moral preservation unless the souls of our young people are protected by the grace of the Sacraments, by frequent and fervent prayer, and by a zealous crusade against the indecencies of the theatre, the movies, and the press.

Company-Keeping Is a Sacred Time

Company-keeping is a most important, and, it should be a sacred time in young people's lives. It should be the preparation for a happiness of long duration—a married happiness mingled with sorrow and pain, with responsibilities and with pleasure, but with the whole lightened by mutual love of man and woman for each other. If company-keeping is a holy period in the life of a man and a woman, it stands to reason anything that defiles the soul and weakens the will is taboo. And a young woman should have a further thought on the subject. Tokens of affection may be no occasion of sin to her, and at the same time be grave temptations to the man she loves and whom she has promised to marry. Charity dictates prudence and consideration on the part of the woman.

What Is Permitted

The *engaged* couple may give a brief kiss of pure affection when

meeting and in parting, for instance. But they must be prudent in this regard, and virtuously restrained. They may express their love for each other by gentle considerations, by pure looks and acts that breathe the ecstasy of their hearts and their chaste longing for each other, but they may not enter upon liberties that weaken the chain of sacred devotion and that ultimately will lead them into sin, if not in act, at least in sins of thought and desire, which sins easily invade the lives of couples contemplating marriage, and unless prudence protects, they cast a shadow on an exquisite thing—human love—and kill the grace of God in the soul. Engaged couples should avoid long periods alone in each other's company. Let them be frank and sweet in their affections; let them share their joys with the family, and keep out in the sunlight. This is the practice that leads to happiness. It is the virtuous right-of-way in the exercise of human affections granted by God.

Promiscuous Demonstrations

As for promiscuous demonstrations of interest, regard, or whatever one might call it, and a scattering of womanly favors by kisses, and the like: I do not even desire to go into this feature in detail. The pages in this little book are consecrated to God and dedicated to our Catholic girls. They are written for the promotion of His glory and for the spread of His Truth, and in the humble hope that the suggestions offered may assist our Catholic young women in preserving in their lives the ideals and standards of Catholic womanhood. It follows, no possible contamination for the innocent should enter by a full discussion of the familiarities that lead to vice. Virtuous youth might be harmed thereby. The guilty should take both inspiration and warning from the ideals set out and such do not need definitions and illustrations of evil customs and evil habits, in which they are already too well versed, to their souls' harm and to the blight of their womanly charms.

Suffice it to say: If a girl thinks straight, if she loves God and strives for virtue, if she has been taught well and is true to the lessons received, she will know better than to kiss Tom, Dick, and Harry, much less permit the so-called "necking" that young people boldly speak of and indulge in.

Kisses Should Be Held at a Premium

Remember, ardent kisses should be held at a high premium. They should be so priceless that only a husband given at the foot of the Altar, whereon rests the Spotless Lamb of God, has the price with which to buy them. And this price is not gold. It is integrity, provided with the sacramental right. You and he will then be man and wife. Your love will be sanctified. Your natural expression of love will be part of the holy Sacrament of Matrimony. You may then enjoy the human element of the passion of love in innocence and with the blessing of God.

Movie "Soul Kiss" Has Led Many To Death

From what I have just written concerning ardent kisses you should understand the term "soul kiss" means to the virtuous Catholic woman and to the earnest Catholic man only one thing when indulged in out of wedlock: *SIN*.

The survey of the Movies made at the request of the Motion Picture Research Council and supported by The Payne Fund, which was offered to the general public in a conveniently abridged form by Henry James Forman under the title of "OUR MOVIE MADE CHILDREN", reveals the spiritual destruction wrought by the amorous scenes common to most of the love features exhibited by the motion picture shows through the acting of their most popular emotional stars. One star was mentioned in particular, but I forbear to name her now. But you girls should take heed from the confession of one young man, who testified he was guilty of

his first grave lapse from chastity after having witnessed the scenes in love-making and lustful seduction created by this much headlined and publicized movie star. If your consciences are not dead you will understand that for you to be guilty of such indiscretions will not only harm your own soul, but you will seriously offend against charity by leading the partner to your indulgence into mortal sins of thought and desire, if indeed not of act.

Be careful! Thousands of girls lose their virtue every year through their heedlessness of danger. Start a fire, inhale the flames of lust, and your soul will die.

As to Silly, Light Kisses

As to the silly, light kisses maidens pawn for masculine attention: Respect yourselves, girls. Don't let down the bars. You will get many more opportunities to marry if you will cultivate womanly graces, and if you are careful not to cheapen yourselves. *And you will be safe.* As indicated

in the above paragraph, many a sad heart now groans in disgrace which would sing a mother-lullaby and be happy in and protected by a good husband's true love, if the girl had not marked herself down.

A Happy Medium Is Always Best

I don't want any one of you to be a prude. I want you to be simple and sweet; gay and friendly; unselfish and attractive; as entertaining as you have talent to be and of which you have learned the virtuous art. But I do beg of you to be reserved, and urge you to hold your treasures from rough hands and greedy, evil desires.

Shun the Violator

Rather than have this boy and that man put his arm around your shoulders and embrace you; rather than have the violator (and every man who takes the sweetness from a girl by undue familiarities is a violator, though the girl by her consent may become a willing party to the viola-

tion)—rather than have the violator bruise your virginal lips, prefer to have the breath of life crushed out by the cruel twining of a huge boa-constrictor, and your blood chilled and congealed by the venom of a viper, on whose head you have unknowingly thrust your foot, than to be embraced and kissed by the men who seek your company, extend their social courtesies, and then, like base sycophants, demand that you pay by the surrender of your soul.

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