

At least one other family presented her with a similar problem. Our nearest neighbor was a Danishman and his family. He was a convert to the Church and his wife had died, leaving a large family--nine children at least. The youngest was a boy about my age. The family and their home gave evidence of the lack of a mother's care in so many ways, but it was fun to go to their home because of their musical abilities and the resultant entertainment aspects. Again mother was faced with the problem of being her charitable self and at the same time protecting me from the negative influences she feared might be there.

Mother's love and concern for her children were of the highest quality at all times. I remember Melvin and mother recalling and laughing about a time when the good Bishop had complained about Melvin's (or Walter's) unseemly conduct in Sunday School. The next Sunday mother kept him home. After Sunday School the Bishop rushed to her home to explain that he didn't mean for her to keep him away from Sunday School. "It's alright," she said, "I've had him here reading the Bible." If some of the family seemed a bit too astute or retiring, it didn't reach Melvin.

On various occasions Melvin's youthful associates have told me of his extreme congeniality, his love of good fun, and his leadership. He was considered the stalwart on whom they could depend. In these frontier settlements of the Church, the conduct of the youth could sometimes be lacking in the cardinal virtues, especially as to smoking and drinking. Several of Melvin's friends have told me that they never knew him to indulge in either, although it was often up to him to supervise the getting home of the over-indulgent. The mother's training and aspirations had taken effect early and soundly in his life.

Melvin's leadership had it's draw-backs. He was in for fun--including mischief. For example: He was the first one in and the last one out of the gate when his crowd went to "tick-tack" a good gentleman who became annoyed at the prank. On this occasion the good gentleman hid behind the lilac bushes while the boys passed going to the house. That gave him a better opportunity to catch one of them as they flew by going out. On this occasion the "catch" was so close that the protector of the home grabbed Melvin's coat collar. Melvin escaped by throwing his arms back to leave the coat in the hands of his captor while he went on. I've always been glad it was Melvin rather than me who had to explain to mother about coming home without a coat and to go back the next day to retrieve it. On one occasion someone complained to mother of some prank of which Melvin was not guilty. Melvin protesting said: "I'm tired of being blamed for every mischievous thing done in town." Walter countered with: "Well, you can hardly blame them, you're probably responsible for ninety percent of them."