

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

A CHRISTMAS VISION
On Christmas Eve 'mid all the joyous glee
That in my plenteousness surrounded me,
I happened by some chance to turn mine eye
Out through a window wreath that hung near by.
And as I glanced through it into the night
I seemed to see, lit by some holy light,
A children's face with wistful, smiling lips
That thrilled me to my very fingertips.
Two eager hands stretched forth called, as in stress,
To me to carry help to Helplessness,
And in the sad eyes of that child I saw
In all its loveliness the Christmas law—
Not a command, no everlasting must
Upon reluctance for its teaching thrust,
But just a pleading hint to him who runs
That all who suffer are God's little ones!
And then the picture in the wreath was gone,
And in its place the Eastern Star-beams shone—
The same that nineteen centuries ago
Led on the Wisemen with their heavenly glow;
And e'en as they I wandered through the drifts
And into lowly places carried gifts
To cheer, and give release, and pay my due
Unto my Lord through them that suffer rue.

YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFT

There's something strange about our "getting old"; to say the least, it's something creepy! We hear a great deal about a respected and honored age, but some of us seem to be in any particular hurry to compete for the honors that are usually heaped upon the "old."
There's no particular flattery in it for you if the only reason for a privilege or two, lies in your seniority. What a blessing it is, that in many things we are so much alike, and that in many more, we are just a little different. Some are "old" at twenty, while others are "young" at sixty. And even if old age has no special attraction for us, the fact is, hurry or no hurry, we have a chance of experiencing some of its privileges altogether too soon. No matter how young you are, you're always asked "how old are you?" Not even the infant in the cradle is an exception to this! Now, if you're not too critically inclined, you'll agree with some of these reflections and if you care to read a little longer, you may also agree with one or two ideas that are coming. Some people, although they are as old "as the hills" seem to be eternally young! You'll admit, too, that you can be "young" in three different ways: you may be young in looks and years, you may be young in your way of doing things even at seventy, and you may be young in thought, or better said, young in spirit. The first kind of "young" is coveted by millions who are fond of exterior beauty; the recipes for this particular "young" are found by the thousands in the so-called "beauty aids" of cosmetics, magicians and quacks. The second kind of "young" is a rather undesirable quality and is usually found in older women, and sometimes in older men who have lost the sense of propriety; these will dress and "paint" and powder as they did when they were twenty. The "old" who are "young" because they are in their "second childhood" are not to be blamed; these deserve all our love and sympathy without the slightest tinge of bitterness. The "young" mentioned in the third place are those who may be wrinkled and gray, and even "ugly" in appearance, but they have kept the charm and beauty of a child's simplicity.
The envy we might feel for these fortunate men and women is very natural, and can be best overcome by imitating them when still young. Sometime the one or the other among us may have read the life of some saint, who, humanly speaking, struck us as being "crabby," but by far the greater majority of the blessed and happy lot, whom we call saints, were those who preserved the keynote of childlike simplicity all through life.
Perhaps, you'll also agree with the following: During these Christmas days, some of us seem to grow "young;" our souls spread their wings for a trip to Bethlehem. We feel a kind of homesickness for the days of long ago; but this homesick feeling is not so much for Bethlehem as it is for the blessed spirit of child-like faith and simplicity. Not that we would despise the chance of paying a visit to Bethlehem; this is simply out of the question for most of us.
St. Jerome, a famous doctor of the Church, had the fortune of spending the last thirty-five years of his life at Bethlehem. The nearness of Bethlehem's manger was a great source of inspiration not only for his happy and prayerful life, but for his learned studies as well. Very often, when in view of Bethlehem's crib, as he himself tells us, he would carry on a spiritual conversation with the Christchild. And

this is the substance of one of his talks: "O Jesus, how hard your bed must be; how You tremble and shiver for my salvation! How can I repay You all?" And the Christchild answered, "Dear Jerome, I don't want anything from you; just keep on singing 'Glory to God in the highest'; I'll strive even more to become poorer in Gethsemane, and on the cross." But the Saint went on "I must give You something, dear child; give You all my money." "Don't Heaven and earth belong to Me," said the Child, "give your money to the poor, and I'll consider it as though you gave it to Me." "That I'll gladly do," said Jerome, "but, I must give you something for yourself, my heart will break if I can't." In return for this the Christchild answered, "Well then, if you insist on giving Me something, I'll ask you to give Me your sins, the pang of your conscience, and your eternal damnation." Quite astonished at this request, St. Jerome continued, "But, dear Child, what can You do with all these nasty things?" And the Child answered, "I'll take your sins upon My shoulders, gladden your burdened conscience, and cancel your eternal damnation." Thereupon Jerome began to cry, and answering he said, "Oh, dearest Child, how deeply You touched my heart; I thought you would ask for something good, but you seem to care only for what is bad in me; take, then, what's mine, and give me what's yours, and I'll surely get to Heaven."

This is the Christmas gift, the Lord wants and expects from you, too! Get rid of your sins by offering them to Him, who takes away the sin of the world. Of course, if you are entirely a stranger in the land of faith and simplicity you'll laugh at the "foolishness" of St. Jerome, and call it all religious nonsense. The world, too, agrees with you, because such things are folly in the eyes of the worldly wise. But, if you want to experience the real Christmas joy, you'll have to get rid of the rubbish that defiles your soul, then you'll understand the angelic song, Glory to God in the highest, and Peace on earth to men of Good Will. Forget all worldly wisdom for a while and follow St. Jerome; go into some church during these days, when there's nobody else in it; go up to the crib—if you happen to see one, and imagine you're St. Jerome talking to the Christchild; then go over to the middle, where the Sanctuary lamp is burning, and kneel there for a minute or two; if you're sincere and simple enough, you'll find that you are just as much of a favorite with God as St. Jerome was; He'll accept your sins with as much grace and mercy as He did St. Jerome's, and you'll leave the church in as happy a mood as St. Jerome left the crib, because now you feel and understand what the Peace is, which is given by God, to men of Good Will.—Lordman in Buffalo Echo.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

WHEN DADDY LIGHTS THE TREE

We have our share of ups and downs
Like other folk;
The pocketbook is sometimes full,
We're sometimes well nigh broke;
But once a year, at Christmas time,
Our hearts are bright to see;
The baby's hand just touches heaven
When Daddy lights the tree.
For weeks and weeks the little ones
Have waited on this hour;
And mother, she has planned for it
Since summer's sun and shower.
With here a nickel, there a dime,
Put by where none should see,
A loving hoard against the night
When Daddy lights the tree.
The tiny tapers glow like stars;
They mind us of the flame
That rifted once the steel-blue sky.
The morn the Christ child came;
The blessed angels sang to earth
Above that far country—
We think they sing above our hearts
When Daddy lights the tree.
The vest kid in mother's arms
Laughs out and claps her hands,
The rest of us on tiptoe wait;
The grown-up brother stands
Where he can reach the topmost
branch.
Our Santa Claus to be,
In that sweet hour of breathless joy
When daddy lights the tree.
We pray that little orphaned ones
May have some share of bliss,
Nor when the Yule tide fires burn
Their bit of gladness miss;
From our rich store we're fain to send
Where'er such children be
A present as from friend to friend
When Daddy lights the tree.
—MARGARET E. SANGSTER

A CHAT ABOUT CHRISTMAS

BY LOTTIE SHIPMAN

I would like to have a nice talk about Christmas—now that holy and beautiful season is once more so close at hand—with some dear little boys and girls. With most children, I think that Christmas is only symbolic of pleasure, the thought of Santa Claus' wonderful visit being quite enough to fill each little body with as much excitement as they can possibly stand. This is only natural, and I certainly would not seek to deprive you of a pleasure which is one of the happiest recollections of my own childhood. I have often lain awake on Christmas Eve listening for the tinkle, tinkle of Santa Claus' bells. Yes, and must confess that I have also peeped between my window curtains for a glimpse of dear old Santa wrapped in his snow-covered cloak, and seated in his snug little sleigh, with the bags of candies and dainty

boys piled high before him. This last reflection would make my little heart thump fast, and hurry me back to my warm bed, for fear the good saint would see me when passing the window—for I knew the penalty for being found wide awake after bed hours meant the loss of the pretty caseau (intended for good children's stockings) and a potato or carrot replaced in its stead.
I am sure that I need not recount the many pleasures of the Holy and the Mistletoe season, for God grant that all my young readers will have golden stores of Yule-tide pictures treasured in their memory. Yes, Santa Claus is more than kind to travel such a distance, and spend so much time in selecting your pretty toys, before tumbling down your chimney; but yet, he should not be your first and only thought at this holy season. It is certainly not St. Nicholas whom you should first thank for the many loving gifts, for you all know that if the dear Christ Jesus had not wished you to receive such kind presents, even Santa Claus, with all his power, could never brighten your Christmas morning. Then first go to the Holy Crib at Bethlehem, kneel with the adoring shepherds, and thank the Divine Child, your young hearts filled with love and gratitude. Then present Him with your little gifts, for surely you would not think of going to that lowly manger with empty hands, when the Holy Child lying there has filled yours so bountifully.
But perhaps some little readers will ask here "What have I got that is worthy of the dear Child Jesus?" Many, many, precious gifts, children—good resolutions, unpleasant duties cheerfully performed, little acts of kindness towards your playmates, the angry word carefully restrained, and a gentle one spoken instead. All this done for the sake of the dear Christ Child, and woven into a garland to bring to the crib upon Christmas morn. Yes, with such a gift you may indeed hasten to the waiting Child, and be assured that no necklace of pearls or glittering diamonds could shine so pure and bright. But it is before this happy season that you must commence your precious garland, adding link by link each day—rubies of loving actions towards your parents, pearls of pity and aid to the poor and homeless orphan, sapphires of thoughtful acts for the many friends around you, and priceless diamonds of resolve to keep free from sin for the true love of Jesus. Happy children with such a garland! Well may you welcome the glorious morn-ing of your Saviour's birth! Yes, place low at His feet your loving gift, and beg of your dear Mother Mary to present it for you to her divine Son. Oh, how gladly and sweetly she will do so, and Jesus will return it to you transformed into a crown of priceless value—for all such gifts given to the Heavenly Child, return unto the loving giver a thousandfold. Having done this, dear children, you cannot fail to enjoy Christmas morning, and your young hearts can freely beat with joyous pleasure at the tempting glimpse of fairy-looking treasures peeping from the many colored stockings. But yet I am quite certain that the recollection of your first Christmas offering will please you far more than caseau, or ornament—yes, and more also than even the most costly, or longed for toy hanging from the dark green branches of the pretty and glittering decked tree.

CHRISTMAS WISHES

With the coming of Christmas I've counted
The wealth of my wishes for you,
And behold! In the years they have mounted
Beyond price, these wishes for you.
It's not gold but love that I'm bringing;
Not jewels but great joy would I give;
And a heart that forever is singing,
All the years that you yet have to live.
With the peace of eternal contentment;
God's blessing for ever and aye—
Pray tell me what else could I give
Thee,
This joyous and glad Christmas day?
—S. M. E.

THE BENEFITS TO THE SOUL

OF A WORTHY HOLY COMMUNION

When the Holy Eucharist is received by a member of the Church, it is called Holy Communion, which, according to the Council of Trent, produces the following effects in the soul: (1) It unites us intimately with Christ and nourishes our soul with divine love; (2) it confers a great increase of Sanctifying Grace; (3) it lessens our evil inclinations; (4) it is a pledge of everlasting life; (5) it fits our bodies for a glorious resurrection. Read the Sixth Chapter of the Gospel of St. John beginning with verse 48, and you will find the Biblical support for the several contentions made by the Council of Trent.
We become as intimately associated with Christ as the food which we eat becomes united to us. St. Peter says that Sanctifying Grace makes us partakers of the Divine Nature. Surely then a personal union with Christ must produce this effect. "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John vi, 58). If people hope to have "everlasting

life" even without receiving Holy Communion, how much greater reason is there to believe that those who are united frequently with their Lord by this intimate union will have "everlasting life" (Ib. 55)? In this same verse Christ assures us: "And I will raise him up on the Last Day." This pledge that the body which the God of heaven enters frequently, the body which, according to the Bible is the "temple of the Holy Ghost" when the soul is in grace, will not be permitted to remain ever separated from the soul. This body, sanctified by Holy Communion will be glorified as was Christ's own Body, and taken to Heaven to be rewarded with the soul for all eternity.
How, then, can one be indifferent to the invitation to frequent Holy Communion? Is it a wonder that the Church urges people to receive Holy Communion every time they attend Mass, where Holy Communion is prepared? The theologians of the early ages tell us that when Christ taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer "Give us this day our daily Bread of the Soul"; and the early Christians did receive Holy Communion as their daily bread from Heaven.
If the Catholic religion had nothing else to differentiate it from other religions than the Holy Eucharist, there would be an infinite distance between it and any other. It is the Holy Eucharist that has drawn so many clergymen from the Episcopal Church to the Catholic; it is the Holy Eucharist which seven hundred Anglican ministers are now demanding the restoration of; it is the Holy Eucharist which gives religion all its warmth and life. It is the Holy Communion that has made the great saints whom the Catholic Church honors, and whom God has deigned to honor in a marvelous manner.—Exchange.

THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

The recent utterances of our Holy Father point clearly to the fact that a divided world brings bitter sorrow to his paternal heart. As the chief pastor of the visible Kingdom of God on earth, his sheep are of every race and clime. He can know no enemies. And so he cries out over the tumult of men's passions for justice and charity. Unfortunately the welfer of cross purposes, the clamor of warring interests drowns out his wish. Unmindful that the power of the wind only reaps the whirlwind, hatreds are being sown, and death and disaster can be the only crop. In a world, mainly Christian, at least in profession, war gained a hold, and peace is promising its continuance. Out of the hearts of men there is being driven all save the passion to control, to exploit and to plunder. The Kingdom of Christ on earth is being weakened, and the standards of paganism are being set up. The

brave and the patient looked for the War to bring men's minds back to God and the Gospel of His Son. Grant that it may! Let those who know that God still reigns, beseech Him that out of all this turmoil there may come His own gracious purposes.—New World.

"NO ROOM FOR HIM"

BY S. R.
No room for Him when first He came,
And now is it not still the same?
Are not our hearts as strangely cold
As Jewish hearts in days of old?
He seeks within our hearts to rest,
Our hearts so filled with self and sin
Can scarce find room for Him within.

Love is in all things a wonderful teacher. There is no school in which a pupil gets on so fast as in that.—Old Curiosity Shop.

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