

FIVE-MINUTE'S SERMON.

Sunday within the Octave of Christmas.

THE ACCEPTABLE TIME. The time to serve God is now, and the place to serve God is right here. Such, brethren, is the lesson of New Year's Day. This day is the starting-point of the whole year, and we should appreciate that the day itself, the present time, is of greater value than the past and the future. We should start right. We should get our minds in a proper condition for the labor and suffering, the joy and sorrow, of the coming year; and that means that we should use the present moment for all that it is worth. Of course, brethren, this is the day of big wishes: "I wish you a happy New Year," we all have heard and said many times today; and that is a good thing. But good wishes don't put money in the bank, or pay off the mortgage on your home, or even put a fat turkey on the table. They are pleasant and charitable, and we repeat, they are good things—all the better if, as a matter of fact, they are likely to be fulfilled.

Now, many a one says: "I cannot be as good a Christian as I should wish because I am too busy just now." So you see he takes it out in good wishes by saying, "I wish you could be a good Christian." He is one of those mentioned by our Saviour: "Not every one who says, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven"; and he adds, "but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Thus our Saviour shows the difference between the one who says and the one who does—the good-wisher and the well-doer. Don't you see that by simply wishing you are putting your business above God? Can't you understand that you think more highly of the guest you entertain to day than you do of the one whom you put off till tomorrow? First come, first served; and who comes before God? God the Father created you. God the Son redeemed you. God the Holy Ghost sanctified you. Is any business equal to creation, redemption, and sanctification? But somebody might insist: Father, that is all true, and yet what I say is true. I am too busy to attend to my religious duties, and I cannot help it. My occupations force themselves upon me. I must work as I do, or I and my family will suffer. I answer: There must be something wrong about this. Is it really possible that you are compelled to work in such a way that you positively cannot receive Communion a few times a year; cannot say your night and morning prayers; cannot attend at Mass—is this really the case? If so, then you are a slave. There have been classes of men among us so situated, but they are not now, because they rebelled against it, took effective measures to remedy the evil and succeeded in doing so. Have you tried? Have you asked leave to get off work to attend to your religious duties? Are you willing to lose a day's wages or a week's pay for the love of God? Think over these questions. Be honest with yourself. Do not blame your employer or excuse yourself until you have made your request and been refused.

The time to serve God is now, and the place is right here. That is the principle upon which our Sunday-school teachers act. They are busy, industrious young men and women. They find time, however, not only to take care of their own souls, but to help parents and priests to save the children of the parish. Much the same may be said of the members of the choir, the gentlemen of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference, the Altar Society, and all others who unite themselves with us in the good works of religion and charity in this parish. To such souls, active and practical, every day is New Year's Day. They are always beginning or carrying on some good work for God, their neighbor, and their own souls, and doing it right here and just now.

It is in this spirit, brethren, that I hope all the good wishes of a Happy New Year may be received by you today and that you may be truly happy in body and soul, in your families, and among your friends. Amen.

Catholics and Divorce.

A Government inspector writing to the Protestant Church Review of the growing evil of divorce has this to say on the teachings of the Catholic Church on the Sacrament of marriage: "Large and increasing as the number of divorces in the United States is, it is an undeniable fact that were it not for the widespread influence of the Roman Catholic Church the number would be much greater. The loyalty of the Catholics to the teachings and doctrines of their Church, and the fact that one of the cardinal doctrines of the Church is that Christ instituted marriage as a holy sacrament, which when consummated can be dissolved for no other cause and in no other manner save by death, has unquestionably served as a barrier to the volume of divorces, which, except among the members of that Church, is said during the past twenty years has been assuming ever-increasing proportions throughout the country."

Blood is Life.

It is the medium which carries to every nerve, muscle, organ and fibre its nourishment and strength. If the blood is pure, rich and healthy you will be well; if impure, it will soon overtake you. Hood's Sarsaparilla has power to keep you in health by purifying your blood rich and pure. Hood's Pills are easy to take, easy to get. Cure indigestion, biliousness, etc. For those who have had experiences can testify that the relief is sure to those who use Hood's Corn Cure.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

Childermas.

Only three days after Christmas the Church calls us to keep the Feast of the Holy Innocents. In old times this day was called "Childermas," and is to honor the memory of those dear little children who were snatched from their mother's arms by the command of wicked King Herod. He was seeking to kill Jesus, and not knowing where to put to death all the male children in Bethlehem that were less than two years old. The Angel of the Lord told St. Joseph to take the Blessed Virgin and the Infant Jesus into a distant country, and He was gone when the little children were murdered. This lovely band of infant Martyrs now stand before the throne of God, and thank Him that they were permitted to suffer for Christ's sake; and you, too, dear boys and girls, though you may not be called upon to die for your dear Lord, have your little sorrows and sufferings, which you may offer to Him with the sufferings of Jesus, and your offering will be accepted.

How the Christ Flowers Came.

It was Christmas Eve in the Black Forest. The whirling snow touched the tree tops; the starry flakes clung to the branches or fluttered down, pure as rose petals wafted about on the breath of angels. Soon the frozen earth was hid from view and a great white world waited, in solemn expectation, the coming of the Christ-Child. Silence lay upon the forest. The charcoal burners tended their smoldering fires and dreamed of home, or, with simple faith, listened for the shepherd's message and the angels' song. When the midnight hour was nigh a sound broke the stillness, the wail of a child in distress. The charcoal burners crossed themselves, and huddled closer to their fires. "Tis the cry from Bethlehem," said Johann reverently. "The Christ-Child is born."

"No child of the Black Forest would be abroad to night?" asked Hans, uneasily. "It might not be one of our little children?"

"Not so," asserted Michael, a sturdy giant. "No *hausmutter* in the Black Forest could be so careless. Content their cot-dream of the angels, while thy good *frau* guards their sleep. It is, as Johann says, the echo from Bethlehem, or mayhap we have nodded and dreamed."

Hans was silent, but presently stole away into the snow-wreathed depths of the forest. A voice in his heart was urging him on.

"May the star of Bethlehem guide me aright," he prayed. "If a child be abroad this holy night, lead me, dear God, to Thy little one."

Again the wail of distress smote upon his ear; a sob was the answer to his prayer; and stooping down the charcoal-burner lifted from the snow a babe, scantily wrapped in swaddling clothes. Its feeble strength was almost spent, as placing it in his breast Hans sped through the forest toward his home.

The *hausmutter* sat by her babes, her face, beautiful with mother-love, radiant in the glow of the Christmas lights burning on the humble tree. And so Hans found her.

"I have brought thee one more, Gretchen," he said as he placed the babe on her bosom. "Succor it for the Christ-Child's sake."

"Who was born to-night," answered the mother, gently, and her love flowed out to the wail, warming it back to life.

The slumbering children stirred and awakened, and, seeing the stranger, rose from their cot, and presently the hut rang with their rejoicing. The lights on the tree twinkled like stars. The children bore their guest towards it, loaded him with its choicest gifts, and played about him merrily. Hans and Gretchen looked on, a great content in their hearts.

Suddenly a radiance not of earth illumined the humble abode; the wail was encircled by a glory that deepened and spread, till the charcoal-burner's hut became an ante-chamber of heaven. Hans and Gretchen fell on their knees in adoration. The babe they had harbored was passing from their vision, floating upward as if borne on angel's wings, his tiny hands outspread in parting benediction.

The children wept for the loss of their playmate. "Hush thee, my darlings," whispered the mother. "Know you 'twas the dear Christ-Child, who came to us, and hath returned to heaven. To morrow thy father shall show thee the spot where he found the Holy Babe."

When the morrow came Hans led the little ones into the forest, and where had been a bed of snow, low flowers bloomed, great waxen blossoms with hearts of gold and petals like silken floss. "The Christ flowers!" cried little Greta, and kneeling before them, as at a shrine, the peasants solemnly recorded a vow to succor each Christmas Day some poor child in honor of the Holy One, who had been their guest. And so, in the Black Forest, is still told this legend of how the Christ-flowers came. — Mary B. O'Sullivan in Donahoe's Magazine.

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CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN.

Childermas.

"The devil has planted his own special sin deep in the heart of every man; and the hardest struggle of all, in the saints' lives, has been the struggle against pride. There is no greater heroism to day than that of the man who has conquered pride and is looked down upon by everyone, as a coward and a spiritless man. For he has plucked out the sin whose roots were deepest in his heart, having, for years as many as he has lived, been fostered and watered by the breath of public opinion. How the devil must laugh to see the sin that caused him the loss of eternal happiness in the sight of God, elevated, enthroned and worshipped as the highest of all virtues by mankind!"

Looking for "a Soft Soap." "I have tried five different employments," says a correspondent, "and I haven't found one that suits me. What shall I do?" Take a big dose of stick at itiveness. You lack persistence. You are looking for a work that has no drawbacks. If there were any such occupation, all the world would take to it and quit every other business. As there is none such, the followers of every pursuit have to endure its disadvantages as well as enjoy its pleasant fruits. Select the most congenial employment and then keep everlastingly at it until you have mastered it and gotten up at the head of the profession.

Affable Manners. There are thousands of engaging ways which every person may put on without running the risk of being deemed either affective or foppish. The sweet smile, the quiet cordial bow, the earnest movement in addressing a friend, or more especially a stranger who may be recommended to us, the graceful attention which is so captivating when united with self-possession—these will insure us the good regards of all. There is a certain softness of manner which should be cultivated, and which, in either man or woman, adds a charm that is even more irresistible than beauty.

The Value of Opportunities. A few paragraphs from Michael J. Dwyer's article on Opportunities in Donahoe's Magazine are worth repeating for the benefit of those who think that the opportunity to be good, or great, or useful, never comes their way, because they arrive on the scene just as it has taken its departure, to quote from the article, into the realm of the bygone, from whose bowers it will never return.

"It is a mistake to suppose that opportunities come alone to those whom nature has blessed in a superior manner than their fellows. Genius, talent, wealth, social position, are gifts that carry shining opportunities with them easily and naturally, but the experience of the world demonstrates that none of these things are necessary to enable any one to turn existence to the highest possible advantage. The best opportunities are those which a man makes for himself, and the most capable of a man can so mould his life and will and character, that opportunities will spring up around him, created by his own native energy and resource.

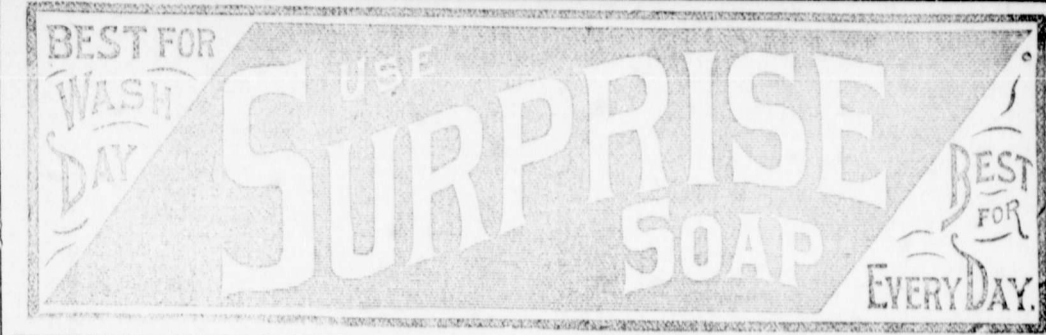
"Human energy and will force are the levellers and equalizers of men. Their potency in material affairs has never yet been exhausted. They have elevated the patient plodder o'times above the geniuses. They have made the average industrious man the peer and frequently the superior of the possessors of a gifted, brilliant mind. Human energy and will, rightly employed, have shown over and over again that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. By their dogged force, persevering effort, and constant alertness, men of the common stamp have pioneered the way of human progress and development, oftentimes when the luminous intellects, which might have cleared and made easier the path, were content to conceal their light and confine their resources beneath the bushel of indifference or sloth."

Self-Analysis. "If people could only see themselves as others see them," is a wail that often goes up from some would-be reformer. This is, of course, impossible; but I believe we may see ourselves as we really are, whether others see us thus or not. See ourselves as others see us would be but a kaleidoscopic view at best, since all are not apt to see us alike.

But surely, we who are really behind the scenes must know ourselves better than they who judge only from appearances. We know our motives for our actions, and though we may be doing our best that seems possible to our fallible judgment, our motives are often misconstrued by others.

We often see things done by our neighbors which we feel prone to criticize, when if we had done these same things ourselves they would have appeared all right to us. And since we know this to be true, why can we not be charitable enough to give other people the benefit of the doubt and suppose they do in good faith what seems best to them?

Not to know our own characteristics can only be possible because of a lack of self-analysis. It is not a great deal of trouble to put ourselves through a course of rigid self-examination; and if we are fair-minded we will do this. Surely we all have a desire to know ourselves as we are, and it seems that none of us need be in ignorance of our faults and foibles. If we would take an inventory of these frequently we



should doubtless grow dissatisfied with our narrowness of soul, and be led to aspire to greater magnanimity.

But the trouble is, we don't do this often enough—we don't make that rigid self-examination. We all, doubtless, have a vague, ever-present knowledge of our temperaments; but we don't examine deep enough. If we did we couldn't be satisfied with ourselves, but would strive to be something nobler—to overcome selfishness, to conquer the brute in us, to subdue sensuality, to be more generous and kinder to others; and, in earnestly striving, we would eventually become so.

No one can know us so well as we might if we would but take the trouble to become acquainted with our own characteristics. If we can do this it is our own fault; but we can do it only by putting ourselves through a course of self-analysis.

Character the Chief Thing. No matter how well or how wisely a young man plans his life, or how laboriously, perseveringly and consistently he carries out his design, or what apparent success he may achieve, he will never exert a proper influence on those about him, or give meaning and completeness to his life, if he be destitute of dignity and force of character, said Bishop Byrne, of Nashville, to the graduates of the Christian Brothers' Academy, at Memphis, a few weeks ago. Character has been the prime factor in all the great revolutions of the world, whether social, political or religious, because it is the only true and adequate expression, whether in word or deed, of man's convictions, sympathies and aspirations of truth. It is his sympathies be with the innocent and oppressed; if his aspirations rise to what is honorable and noble, then will his life possess a latent force and a gracious charm which will attract and subdue those within the range of its influence and command the respect and exert the approval of all men.

A man of sterling integrity of character will be impressed with a vivid consciousness of what is due to himself. He will be self-respecting; never doing an act in the dark that he would blush to do before the world; never sundering his love and lavishing his attentions on strangers, reserving only the poverty of his heart and vulgar side of his nature for those who should be nearest and dearest to him on earth; never afraid to avow his religious principles when the occasion requires it, openly and before all men; demanding loyalty to truth and obedience to God the highest services and the noblest and most ennobling privileges of man.

We hear it sometimes said that it will not do for a Catholic to openly avow his convictions; that his religion will close against him the avenues of honorable ambition. It cannot be denied that there exists a prejudice against Catholics; that it is active without being apparent; that it pervades our literature, our laws and our social and political life; that it hangs like a noxious exhalation in the atmosphere and poisons the air we breathe; but it may be doubted if it be as potent for evil in this instance as is frequently asserted. The world admires the man who has the courage of his convictions, and bows in deference to a pure and noble life. If a young Catholic gentleman be self-respecting; if his habits be not those of fashionable and expensive dissipation; if his associates be of the honorable, the virtuous and the wise; if he live not like a pappan, while proclaiming himself a Catholic; if his conduct be in exemplification of his profession; if his life be such that he can stand before the world with pure heart and clean hands and challenge its malignity; then I say that in these days and in this land his religion will be no bar to his advancement in any business or profession that is worthy of engaging the thoughts or the energy of man. The religion of Mr. Taney did not prevent him from reaching the distinguished position of Chief Justice of the United States; and neither did that of Mr. Charles O'Connor prevent him from respecting great emolument from his profession and winning the splendid reputation of being the first lawyer of the land.

There is nothing so commanding, nothing so enduring, nothing that shines with so steady a lustre as nobility of character. It clothes men with a serene majesty and an austere simplicity, the value of which the world recognizes as being incomparably greater than the bare possession of towering talents. That Francis Bacon was one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever seen there can be no manner of doubt; and there can be just as little doubt that he was one of the most despicable of characters. While Bacon is remembered partly for his splendid endowments and partly for the dishonorable use he made of them, Sir Thomas More, who was almost, if not quite, his equal in talents and ability, and whose eloquence and learning were known and admired in every country of Europe, has come down to us, not as the representative and embodiment of the culture of his age, but as a great and

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beautiful moral character, or, as Macaulay calls him, "one of the choice specimens of human wisdom and virtue," who, rather than assist at the coronation of Anne Boleyn and thus compromise by one tith the convictions of his faith, laid his head upon the block with the courage of a martyr and the dignity of a saint.

A GOOD WORK.

Every Christian must commend the work that Mr. Moody, the Protestant evangelist has been engaged in in this city. That does not, of course, mean that a Catholic can assent to Mr. Moody's opinions or beliefs as to what is or what is not the true doctrine of the Christian religion. But all Catholics acknowledge that sincere belief in and practice of any form of Protestantism is to a large extent at least Christian in its essence and therefore to be preferred to infidelity or to mere religious indifference.

The fact is that a very large proportion of nominal Protestants, for one reason or other, rarely if ever enter a church or come under any Christian influences directly once their Sunday school period has been passed. The ministers do not and cannot reach these great numbers of unattached and therefore it is that so many of these so-called "evangelizing" methods are employed—"Salvationists," "Volunteers," "Praying bands" and the like.

Now most of these irregular methods of gathering unattached Protestants, so as to bring for a time at least religion to the attention of their minds, are open to various objections, among which is that most of them tend to bring religion into ridicule and contempt because of the sensationalism that forms a part of most of these methods.

But for Mr. Moody it can be said that he is sincere, is earnest, pious, really appears to love God and the cause of Christ as he understands it, and is eminently successful through his zeal, eloquence, and sagacity in presenting religion in a way to win his Protestant auditors back from their coldness or indifference, and induce a great number of them to attach themselves permanently to some form or other of Christianity, even though it be one of the defective forms that compose the Protestant sects. And it is to be added as greatly in his favor that Mr. Moody has all along through his evangelizing career, that has lasted now very many years, been not only courteous and magnanimous, but even cordial in his references to the Catholic Church and religion.

When one reflects how many Catholics there are in all our large cities who are to all intents and purposes as much unattached as the Protestants who make up the most part of Mr. Moody's audiences, there arises a feeling of regret that we Catholics have not some sort of agency at work corresponding to Mr. Moody and his work. If these Catholics, for one reason or other, will not go to the church, it may be well asked might not some one on behalf of the Church go to them?—Catholic Review.

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Be Sincere. Be honest with yourself, whatever the temptation. Say nothing to others that you do not think, and play no tricks with your mind. Of all the evil spirits abroad at this hour in the world, insincerity is the most dangerous.

The Children's Enemy. Scrofula often shows itself in early life and is characterized by swellings, abscesses, lup diseases, etc. Consumption is scrofula of the lungs. In this class of diseases Scott's Emulsion is unquestionably the most reliable medicine.

Totally Deaf.—Mr. S. E. Crandall, Port Perry, writes: "I contracted a severe cold last winter, which resulted in my becoming totally deaf in one ear and partially so in the other. After trying various remedies, and consulting several doctors, without obtaining any relief, I was advised to try Dr. Thomas' Emulsion Oil. I warmed the Oil and poured a little of it into my ear, and before one half the bottle was used, my hearing was completely restored. I have heard of other cases of deafness being cured by the use of this medicine."

The Best Pills.—Mr. Wm. Vandervoort, Sydney Crossing, Ont., writes: "We have been using Paroel's Pills and find them by far the best Pills we ever used." For Delicate and Debilitated Constitutions these Pills act like a charm. Taken in small doses, the effect is both a tonic and a stimulant, mildly exciting the secretions of the body, giving tone and vigor.

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