

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

ON BUSINESS METHODS

By Joseph P. Cooney, S. J., in The Queen's Work
Turning over the advertising pages of a widely circulated weekly I happened upon an advertisement about razor strops. It ran something like this: "You have been having trouble with your razor. Let us send you free for ten days' trial this strop, and you'll forget about your razor. Return this strop if you don't like it—free. We couldn't afford to make this offer but that we are supremely confident that 99 out of 100 will never send it back. Sign this coupon, and send it. Write now."

This advertisement struck me, not by reason of its originality, but as a representative sample of modern business methods. Thousands of advertisements are put forth every week based on the principle of the above—the principle of putting the goods into the very hand of the prospective buyer, but at no immediate cost to him. All that is asked is that he actually try the goods. He is gently hurried into such trial by the time limit of ten days or so, given him. And if the trial is made, the sale is made ninety times out of a hundred. This is a good business method because it is satisfactory to the buyer. It approaches him honorably; does not try hypnotic tactics to force a sale. "We won't say a word," the distributors promise. "Just try the goods. They'll talk to you for us." And with a good article, only one out of a hundred will refuse to keep it.

From razor strops to souls is not, we may think, an easy transition. It does seem rather a high leap, but let us take it on the run. Why not apply this strop idea to souls? Why not use business methods in the only business of man while—the business of our salvation? "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Note the business atmosphere in these striking words. Loss, gain, profit, are the basic ideas in all the work upon our soul. "If you wish to save your soul," God says, "go into it as a business. Use business methods."

Does God Himself use business methods in His dealings with us? Yes, He does. Honorable, fair, broad, generous business methods. First of all, He offers to send you, free for trial, His grace, His gifts. You need, as everyone needs, some special help. You are in trouble, in grief. Some dark cloud of sin hangs over you; some insistent temptation harasses you into despair; some furtive demon follows you about, and fearfully catches at you. You are having trouble, and you would be free of it. Then use business methods. Let God send His grace to you. Return it if you will after you have tried it—really tried it. But once you have tried it, you will not return it, for you will find those other beautiful words singing in your heart: "My yoke is sweet, and My burden light."

This is all that God asks of us, to try His grace. "Taste and see how the Lord is sweet." And you will never after desire the fleshpots of Egypt. Deep down in your soul you know that this is so—that the Lord is sweet. Go back to the time of the days of your young innocence, compare that bright and happy time with the dark, dull years of sin that followed; the heavy groping of mind; the stifling oppression of heart; the ominous glare of hell lighting up in flashes the gloomy cavern of our soul, where evil thoughts move ceaselessly back and forth, like demons in their native shades. And once upon a time fresh sunlight was over everything here, and God so near that you could reach out and touch Him with your hand. Oh, if it could be so again!

It can be so again. "Though thy sins be red as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." Try the Lord again, and see how near He is. Taste and see how sweet. One step and we are in the presence of God once more. One word from His grace, and all is well with us. Easy and simple, and very businesslike it is, this shaking off trouble and saving our soul.

And what do we say to this offer God makes us? What is our attitude toward Him? Are we beginning to say, "Yes, we will try, but not now?" Ah, that is not business. "Write now," we are told by the advertiser. "Come now," God says, "Now is the acceptable time, the time of salvation." But we prefer to stay down in the mine, suffocating to death, and will "not now" enter the cage that is lowered to raise us to the top. We will, but not now, means "We will, but we won't." God will have no further dealings with a mere pretender.

"It is too much trouble." Too much trouble to get out of trouble? Too much trouble to be free, to be masters in our own house? Too much trouble to be with God?

The real difficulty with us is—lack of nerve, lack of that genuine pluck and spirit of endeavor that will bring us to a business understanding with God. When the question comes up in our conscience of dealing fairly and above board with God, we go into a species of stage fright. We try to say yes and no in the same breath; we falter, and haggle and shuffle around the truth; we say with our lips that we welcome God, but with our hearts that He is a hard master; we reach out our hand to take the offer God makes us, but at the same time reach back with our other hand so as not to miss anything the devil has to put into it.

This is the kind of treatment God hates, and will not endure. If we are to do business with God, it is with Him and nobody else. And with Him is all or nothing. We cannot serve two masters; it must be either one or the other, either God or the devil, and the boy who thinks he is smart enough to have a little of one, and a little of the other, and get off safely with it, is a mere trickster who arouses the anger of God, and evokes the derisive contempt of the devil.

Be a boy who does an honorable business with God. He gives Himself entirely to you. You, in turn, see that you give yourself entirely to Him. Make a fair exchange—or none. Give the grace of God a real trial, even if only a ten days' trial. But don't try to cheat Him in the deal. Be a boy who dares to be himself, who dares to let God lead him; not a crying child whose mother has to drag it along the sidewalk, a ridiculous and uninviting object. Dare to walk right up to the deadly and widening chasm that separates you from happiness, and when you get there do not spend your time weakly looking down into the depths that make you dizzy. The leap you are to take is upward and forward. Then follow the climber's law. Look upward, and forward. Keep a cool head, a stout heart. Gather yourself for the spring—every bit of you, body and soul, boldly take the leap, and you will find yourself in the arms of God.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

AGNES' FIRST COMMUNION

It was the lovely month of June; the month of roses, of sunshine, and, above all, the month of the Sacred Heart. What a fitting time for the pure, innocent hearts of little children to be joined in that first sweet union with their divine Lord! The first Communion class of St. Joseph's was to begin, on the morrow, its three days of retreat, the final preparation for the great day. A little group of girls was seated on the grass, under the big shade trees in the school yard. They had been discussing the coming retreat, and now the subject had turned to the pretty new dresses, sashes and hair ribbons they would wear on Sunday morning.

"You should see my dress," said Elsie Grant. "It is made of the softest goods, and trimmed with real lace."

"Mother has made me the loveliest saah," said Susie Smith. "It has long ends, caught up with tiny rose-buds."

"I am going to have real silk stockings, and white kid shoes," said Anna Martin; "and a veil that mother says is as fine as a spider's web." "What are you going to wear, Agnes?" asked one of the girls. Little Agnes Murray had remained silent when the subject turned to dress, for she was to have nothing fine and dainty. Agnes Murray was the eldest of several children. Her father had died about three years before, and her poor, care worn mother had been obliged to support her little family by what work she could secure. Sometimes it was sewing; and when the sewing season was dull, she would have to resort to washing. Many more cares and privations had fallen to Agnes' lot than to these other girls, who had comfortable homes, and well-to-do parents. Agnes loved pretty things, too, but she stifled the thought of aversion, as she remembered the coarse cotton dress and veil that she must wear. The remembrance of her poor mother's extra washing that had been necessary to buy even this, and the late hours that she had remained up, while the children slept, in order to make the dress, softened little Agnes' heart, and she resolved that not one envious thought should enter her mind.

It was late on Saturday afternoon. The little first Communicants had made their confessions, and were now gathered for the last instruction. Good Father Maurus, who had won the children's hearts, when on their baby days they had for the first time toddled off to school and Sunday school, stood in their midst. After he had dwelt for some time on the greatness of the sacrament they were about to receive, and the necessity of their hearts being pure and innocent, he said:

"Now, my dear children, to morrow you will receive our dear Lord in the sacrament of His Love. He will give Himself to you, and you in turn should give yourself to Him. Offer Him your hearts, and offer them, as it were, in a chaplet of flowers—the flowers of virtue. Surround your hearts with the lilies of purity, the roses of love and the violets of humility. If you will offer your hearts thus to Him, even the angel's adoration will not be more pleasing to Him."

Little Agnes remained on her knees before the altar long after the others had gone. She pondered the words of the good priest, and prayed to our Blessed Lady to help her receive her dear Saviour with love, purity and humility. The rays of the setting sun streamed through the stained-glass windows and lit up the fair head of the child. When Agnes returned home she helped her mother with the evening tasks. She prepared her little sisters for bed, and heard their night prayers. Their baby lips repeated the "Hail Mary" after Agnes, that their dear sister would make a good first Communion on the following day.

That night, as the soft moonbeams and the fragrance of the roses were stealing in her window, little Agnes fell asleep, and our Lord sent her a

most beautiful dream. It was the morning of the great day, and the little church seemed a very mansion of Heaven. The air was fragrant with the breath of flowers, and myriads of shining tapers gleamed on the altar. Through the open windows came the songs and twitterings of the birds, as they flew in and out among the ivy leaves that clung to the old brick walls. Then, from far away came the tones of heavenly music. It did not sound like the organ, but music that she thought must come from the harps of purest gold. As the golden strains came nearer, Agnes heard the sounds of many footsteps, and finally there came through the open doors of the church the little first Communion band.

Every child was in its place, just as they had been trained by Sister Mary Julian, and Agnes saw herself near the end of the procession. In its hands each child carried a bunch of flowers; some were larger, while some were quite small, and down in the depths of the flowers was each child's little heart. Agnes was surprised to see that her flowers were more numerous than any of the others. It was all her little arms could do to reach them. All were lilies, roses and violets, and Agnes knew that these were the virtues that good Father Maurus had told them about.

Now, Agnes discovered the origin of the heavenly music; for, dimly at first, and then more clearly, she could see the children's guardian angels. Their beauty dazzled Agnes and she could hardly keep her eyes from closing. The angels carried harps of gold, and now they played the beautiful and familiar little hymn, "O Lord, I am not worthy."

As the children were approaching the Communion rail, Father Maurus was repeating the "Ecce Agnus Dei," when Agnes saw our dear Lord, Himself, descend the altar steps, and approach the row of little children. Never before had Agnes imagined a face like this. Kindness, gentleness and love lit up the divine features. Close beside the dear Saviour was our Lady, smiling in holy happiness upon the little band. When our Lord came to each child its little heart was offered to Him, with the lovely flowers of virtue. When it was Agnes' turn, our Saviour's face was more radiant than before, and as He received the little heart, surrounded by the blossoms of purity, humility and love, He turned to His mother and said:

"This is my chosen one."

When Agnes awoke she could hardly realize that it had been a dream, so real had it seemed. Even the fragrance of the flowers seemed still in the air, and she could almost hear the strains of the golden music.

That morning, during the holy Mass, the poor little dress was entirely forgotten. Agnes was by far the happiest of the little ones, for she was living again through her beautiful dream, but this time it was a reality.

Many years have passed. Agnes is now Sister Mary Agnes, of the Sisters of Mercy. It is her duty and privilege each year to prepare the little ones for the first Communion. No other seems so well fitted for the work as she, and no wonder, for had she not really seen the beauty and love of the Holy Eucharist when but a little child?—Mary Mayer in Canadian Freeman.

LEST WE FORGET

Shane Leslie, in The London Tablet

Shane Leslie, writing in a recent issue of The London Tablet on the probable commemorations of the brave dead slain in battle, after this terrible European war is over, makes a very pertinent suggestion for the Catholics of Great Britain. He says: "For the part taken by those dear and near to them, every mourner will seek to make appropriate and historical memorial. In an age in which heraldry had not lost its meaning or distinction, one could imagine a fleur-de-lys being added to the arms of all who have fallen in France, as the cross was added to the shields of Crusaders. In a Catholic age, Masses would be founded for their souls' estate, and altars, tombs erected throughout the great cathedrals of England. But alas! one realizes that the national cathedrals are not likely to be used in nearer accordance with the sentiments of their builders than as receptacles for regimental relics or as settings for the orchestral performance of 'The Dream of Gerontius.' Requiem Mass and Dirige psalm, not in phantasy, must be confined to the Catholic body, dearly as they would wish to share them with their fellows in the war. But we come to the possibility of an everlasting memorial being made to the sadly increasing roll of Catholic officers killed in action. One is almost impelled to ask if the great bricked Cathedral at Westminster was not destined to be built in time to enshrine their memory. In many respects a unique opportunity presents itself. In the course of no war have so many Catholics been killed in the service of England since perhaps the time of the Plantagenet wars in France, the loss during which is still commemorated by the Foundation of All Souls at Oxford. Never have so many hearts and hands ached to make one spot at least forever sacred to the souls of their dead. It happens that English Catholics at this moment possess one of the few uncompleted Cathedrals of Christendom, one of whose side chapels—dedicated to St. George and the English Martyrs—many would gladly

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join in fighting with marble and mosaic to the everlasting memory. It would not be too much to suggest how much beauty and interest would accrue to a chapel inscribed with the names of all Catholic officers who fall in the war, be they a hundred or five hundred, and all they might hope to see, the insignia of the great Catholic schools in which they were bred—upon the ironwork of its gates or the marble of its walls. A foundation of Masses to be in perpetuity for their repose would consecrate and eternalize the gift to the dead in a way that would not be possible for a secular monument. It would give an opportunity to many, who are at a loss what form of monument and where to build, to share in a general yet individual eulogium, which future generations would always associate with the national yet sacred character of the Cathedral.

Yet, are not the private soldiers as worthy of a like Catholic remembrance? They give all they have on earth, and all they might hope to see, and their families are not so well provided for much less so well able to erect or share in erecting any memorial to these humble heroes. In saying this, we do not forget that the loss of officers in the British army is greater than the like loss in any other of the armies; and that the Catholics are represented, as they have been in our various wars in the United States, out of all proportion to their actual number.

As a general proposition the father's mind shapes the son's manhood, and the latter determines the boy's future. While the mother is the fountain of virtue, the father is the force that augments or checks morality. What the father does, rather than what he says, is the force that affects the son's mentality. Even as a babe in the cradle, the boy distinguishes between words and actions. The father's life is a lesson that the son daily learns and usually follows. The father remains the son's ideal until deception or unworthiness shatters the standard.

If the boy's mother is good and virtuous and the father is not, the boy argues that it is all right for girls to be virtuous, but not at all necessary or advisable for him. With the boy, the character of the father is the important thing. If this be deficient the Church and school have a herculean task to make a moral, intellectual and religious being of the boy.

He can therefore best safeguard and promote the moral and material welfare of our Catholic boys by the head of each household realizing the importance of the position occupied by him and by living a moral, honest, courageous and religious life—such a life as does not nullify or vitiate the teachings of the mother, school and Church. If the father strives to know the right and acts in harmony with the best light that is in him,

time raise our hearts to God during our work and say: "My Jesus, I do this for love of Thee." I can never forget the impression the sermon of that holy father made upon me, and very often during my work I say the little prayer he taught us.

"This simple avowal explained something which had often surprised us—we noticed that this carpenter often touched his cap without apparent reason, but we were far from suspecting that he was breathing the little aspiration he had learned so many years ago from the zealous Redemptorist."

That intention would turn into heavenly gold the labors, meals, amusements and sufferings of every day. It would make them precious in the eye of God. It would lay up treasures that would make a competence for eternity.—The Child Apostle.

FORMER ANGLICAN CLERGYMEN ORDAINED IN ROME

From the Lamp On February 27 His Eminence Cardinal Pompili, Cardinal Vicar of His Holiness, in the Church of St. John Lateran, ordained to the priesthood the following ex-clergymen of the Church of England: Henry Edward George Rope, graduate of Christ Church, Oxford, received into the Church in 1907; Charles E. Whiteford, graduate of Merton, Oxford, received in 1910; John Cyril Hawes, graduate of King's School, Canterbury, and Lincoln Theological College, missionary in the Bahamas, 1908-1911, received at Graymoor on St. Joseph's Day, 1911.

At the same time the following converts were ordained to the deaconate: Walter Scott Hill, curate of St. Mathew's, Burnley, 1907-12; Peter Launcelot Pears, received in 1906; John Wilson Cosser, of Brighton, received in 1908.

Father Hawes left behind him at Graymoor an imperishable monument in that he drew the original plans of our monastic church on the Mount of Atonement as a thank offering to Almighty God and St. Francis of Assisi for his conversion to Catholicism. He has been adopted by the Bishop of Geraldton, West Australia.

RESPONSIBILITY OF FATHERS

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even though he may be in error and his action wholly wrong, his honesty and purity of purpose will teach the lesson youth so greatly needs. It is the continual, never falling honesty of purpose that makes the man of character as well as the man of substance. It is the back sliding, side-stepping, faltering mental attitude that makes the moral pervert as well as the improvident citizen.

The future of our Catholic boys lies with their fathers. The fathers bear the same relation to their sons as does the sunshine to the planted seeds. They can draw out the best that is in them, or blight their moral and intellectual growth. If they are conscious of their high calling and are careful in their course, if they are willing to work and to sacrifice and are wary of selves and heedless of ease, if they are steadfast in their principles and uncompromising in sin, they need not be wealthy, educated or gifted to make their boys virtuous, intellectual, religious and prosperous men.—Exchange.

A SAINT AND FRIENDSHIP

It has been truly said that, of all the sentiments of which the human heart is capable, friendship is the most perfect, because it is also the freest, the deepest, and the most pure. In its highest form, it is essentially a matter of choice, not the mere natural result of propinquity, similarity of taste, temperament, or social condition.

Almighty God, in His infinite wisdom and boundless love, has ordained that, for each of us on this earth, there is one, or it may be several souls, for whom our own is made—souls predestined, if we will only seek them and chose them aright, to be our greatest happiness, as well as our strongest protection against evil. Sowers of those seeds of joy and edification, which are ultimately to blossom into fragrant flowers, brightening the rough places of our life's road, such friends are, in very truth, the best gift that Heaven can bestow.

"There is nothing better in this world than friendship," says La Bruyere; and Pere Laocordaire even more beautifully expresses the same idea, when he writes: "A friend's affection is the most priceless treasure here below." One of the chief secrets of this bond is its mysterious power of actually transforming the character. No matter how firm our will, how acute our intelligence, how dominant our personality, friendship leaves its indelible marks; modifying opinions, penetrating the innermost sanctuary of the heart, and all unconsciously altering the entire outlook. In fact, the influence of a friend is practically incalculable; not alone by word and example, but in absence also, it unconsciously exerts its magic spell, till, in the end, it becomes the ruling guide of our lives.

Very necessary, therefore, is it, not only to strive to render ourselves worthy of a noble and true friendship, but to make our choice prudently and with care. "Choose thy friend amongst a thousand," says some wise man, and having chosen, show him fidelity, devotedness and implicit confidence. Confidence is the very cornerstone of friendship, as sincerity and trust are its foundation.

Fidelity, as has been said, is of the first importance, for an absolutely faithful friendship includes not only reciprocal confidence and devotedness, but an urgent desire to meet, in spite of all obstacles of time and distance, and the many inevitable changes that come with changing years. We may not say it; we may not allow ourselves even to think it; but when absence is no longer a pain; when we can "do without a friend,"

so to speak; when we make no effort to see him, then surely our affection is on the wane.—St. Anthony's Messenger.

HOME IS THE FIRST SCHOOL

Says the Paulist Calendar: "Will parents ever rid themselves of the notion that because their child is going to school their own responsibility diminishes? The home is the place to uproot the child's selfish tendencies; to eradicate mean, sneaky characteristics, to discipline false pride; and to blot out the dark spots caused by contact with the world. The child should be allowed to develop naturally under watchful eyes; he should be given practical lessons in honor and rectitude; given a proper realization of his relation towards others, that he may become deferential but not fawning; outspoken but never the source of pain. The school can never take the place or do the work of the home. Home is not merely a stopping place; it is God's workshop for the moulding of human beings into men and women. And although the child be fortunate enough to be placed in a good Christian school, it must still be borne in mind that the moral principles he hears in the class-room are mere abstractions for him, until they be applied, and become real and living in his life. And where can this be done better than at home, under the care of mother?"



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