

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN.

Lenten Abstinence.

One of the most commonly recommended acts of Lenten abstinence for Catholic men, is abstinence from intoxicating liquors during the forty days of penance. The rigors of the holy season have been so far mitigated that those engaged in hard and exhausting labor of any kind, that there remains little compulsory self-denial for the class. Whatever is undertaken is, bodily mortification, and correspondingly meritorious, since it bespeaks the desire to the spirit of the occasion. Those who yield to the suggestion and forego the use of stimulants make thereby an edifying profession of faith and goodness.

This form of Lenten abstinence has many distinct advantages besides the resultant spiritual ones. It attended in some cases by substantial financial benefits. These may be and sometimes are productive of a permanent social and material betterment. So that from every point of view, both spiritual and temporal, the custom is fraught with great possibilities for good. It has frequently happened that the practice of eschewing all kinds of strong drink during the several weeks of Lent has led to the final establishment of the habit of total abstinence during all the other days of the year. It is needless to remark that no harm ever came from such an eventuality.

Total abstinence from intoxicants never broke any hearts nor destroyed any lives. It never contributed to the spread of vice and crime. No society or community ever found in it an agency of demoralization and degeneration. On the other hand, it has kept men strong and steadfast in righteousness. It has insured the happiness and prosperity of innumerable homes and families. It safeguards and promotes social and civic purity. It is the natural enemy of vice and depravity and sensuality, and of everything that tends to undermine that which is best and noblest in human conduct and civilization.

It is quite clear that naught but good can come from the inculcation of this form of Lenten mortification, either to the individual or the community. Nothing but good comes from the practice of total abstinence during the forty days of penitential endeavor and all the days that succeed them to the end of the chapter.—Monitor.

Getting on in the World.

Be thrifty, be sober, be steady, be industrious, be alive to your own interests, go ahead and keep ahead—these are all excellent maxims. But it is insisted upon that the exclusion of higher and nobler ideals than merely the desire for money of fame or place or power. Yet in the advice addressed to youth in these latter days, there is too little mention of that solemn truth that this life is only for a brief space and the life to come for all eternity; and that therefore all our striving and endeavor is for no value to us if we ignore the better part of our souls.

A writer in The Public, J. H. Dillard, notes that of late there had been, at least among Protestants, a lessening of the sense of a supernatural motive. There has been, he contends, a transfer of supreme interest from the other world to this. Formerly, he says, and he has an excessive insistence on this, the present life assumes to be that this present life is all that we need attend to. Look out for the present and let the future take care of itself.

Most of the preaching in the churches, Mr. Dillard says, has adopted this tone. (Of course he means the Protestant churches.) It has ceased to emphasize as it once did the opinion that the main importance of the life hereafter. In their methods of work, also, he sees that the churches have tended to "worldliness," and he declares that the so-called institutional Church and much of the work of the Y. M. C. A., which decidedly lays stress upon "getting on in the world," are indications of the same tendency. Two addresses which Dr. Dillard recently heard delivered to audiences of the Y. M. C. A. dwelt exclusively upon the virtues that are supposed to foster prosperity and worldly success. An announcement of the night school of one of these associations, which he recently happened to see, had a cut on the back representing a hand reaching for a bag of money, with the words, "Get there."

Now comes the most important point in Mr. Dillard's article, and the one which must strike Catholics forcibly. "In the universities, colleges and schools, we hear the same emphasis. In the commencement address of the past twenty-five years, it has been evident that the predominant note is that which keys young men to efforts for the success which belongs to personal ambition. We do not at all maintain that such good moral advice has not been given; but the influence counts where the stress is laid. Unquestionably in modern addresses to young men the stress is laid upon "getting on in the world"; and the advice is readily translated into personal ambition and materialistic ideals.

"The result of this preaching and teaching would naturally be a weakening of the spiritual and moral fibres. The partial divorce of the churches from religion—taking religion to pertain to the bond that links man to an enduring life—and the almost total separation of education from such religion, have tended to withdraw from men the stimulus to the highest ideals, by which alone they can see the true significance of this life, as not apart from, but a part of, the enduring life."

We should all like to see our people, young and old, prosper, but it is small consolation to know or feel they are prospering at the expense of their spiritual welfare. We have a duty as Catholics to do all in our power to lessen the influence of present-day materialism. Catholic parents can do

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

BERT'S TENTH SALE.

His face was half freckled and generally, too, half dirt. In spite of this, however, if by some curious arithmetic you would find in that youth of thirteen years a face all sincerity and candor and simple honesty. Life is a glorious thing to some, but to poor Bert Tibbs ever once sufficing it. He had in him the rare, real stuff which citizens and soldiers are made of; a gameness of nature which prevented him from murmuring, and a cheeriness of disposition which could put up placidly with such plebeian ills as cold and hunger and the lack of household comforts. If he had lived in the days which have belonged to the Stoics or the Spartans. As it was, he grew up amid the obscurity of modern times, and his lonely home was down by the waterside in the City of Churches.

Bert's mother had died long before he was old enough to realize the full meaning of such a loss. Ever since that bereaving event the Tibbs family of three members had dragged along in the squalor and darkness of lower Emmett street. An elder sister, Maggie, who was but sixteen herself, kept house for them in a nominal sort of way. At least she made the beds and swept out the rooms and managed the cooking, which latter was indeed very elementary. The other member of the family group was Bert's father, Waldo Tibbs, a man of extraordinary shiftlessness, who never had any regular avocation or employment, but took odd, straggling jobs, sometimes laboring as a dock hand, and at other times serving in a nondescript capacity as spare hand at the electric car barns. The history of that father could be summed up in one ominous word—drunk.

Occasionally Maggie used to work at making artificial flowers, and in the engrossment of this occupation she had picked up an acquaintance with a young co-worker named Helen Waters, whose home was out in suburban Flatbush. The two became firm friends, and Helen, pitying the other's more straitened lot, often importuned Maggie Tibbs to come out and spend a week at Flatbush. She promised, moreover, to render that sojourn an extremely pleasant one.

At length the opportunity presented itself, or at least Maggie so decided. Her father had just entered upon the riotous festivities of a characteristic spree, and Maggie Tibbs quietly reared that during the indefinite period of his carousal there would be no special need of any housekeeping. Bert, being of no account, could take care of himself; he was not old enough to be helpless like her father.

"I'll leave you seventy-five cents," Bert, she said, "do you think that'll be enough?" "Oh, sure, Maggie; that'll do fifty'll do!" "I'll make it seventy-five," she said generously; "that'll not be too much for a whole week. You won't have to buy much of anything, you know; and then, too, things are so much nicer when they're cooked fresh."

"Always grease the pan well before you fry anything, Bert. Don't forget that."

"I think I'll buy sausages every day."

"Do. They're the easiest thing in the world to cook—and Mr. Maloney has such lovely ones; and he always gives you honest measure. Burkhardt doesn't; he'll skin you, Bert, every time if you don't watch him putting them on the scales. Now, don't grease the pan too much; there's such a lot of grease, anyway, in sausages, you know."

"But dad doesn't care for sausages, does he?" "No; they give him the hiccups, he says, and they make his stomach sour, too. If dad happens to come home before I get back, you can get him some eggs."

"All right."

"And there are two different kinds you know; there's the barrelled eggs and the farmer's eggs. Be sure and ask Maloney for the barrelled eggs because you can get more of them for the same money; and you know that when dad comes home and gets all sobered, he's terribly hungry, and he eats a whole lot. You can tell dad that I've gone out to stay with Helen for a few days."

good-bye; don't get one bit lonesome, will you, till I come back?" "No, I won't; good-bye!" and she bent over and kissed him tenderly and was gone.

The night approached, a cold, bitter, wintry night, with shrieking wind and occasionally a flurrying gust of early snow. Bert, despite his promise of immunity, felt melancholy enough as he lay there through the long dark hours on his bed in those dingy quarters and listened to the rage of the outer elements. He awoke early, very early, and went hurrying in lieu of a window pane, was blown in by the strong night winds, and through the yawning aperture the cold outer currents penetrated with malignant vehemence.

Bert rose and started a fire in the kitchen stove, and somehow nothing seemed to work right; dampers and drafts brought only puzzling results, and the smoke rook back from the chimney into the room in a way that made the youngster apprehensive. It was no use trying. He gave up the task and contented himself with a cold breakfast of bread and milk. Then, as if impelled by some instinctive wish to overcome the oppressive loneliness of those silent rooms, he pulled on his winter jacket and darted out aimlessly into the bitter atmosphere.

A tide of people hurrying up the street made Bert dimly conscious of the fact that it was Sunday morning, and that already good Christian folk were on their way to the morning services. There was no thought of church going in Bert's own mind, and yet he trudged on along with the others.

When he had reached the porch of St. Peter's church, the temple whither the throngs were tending, he halted short and watched the others as they hurried on through the huge doorway. His little white teeth chattered with the cold, and his hands, though buried in the pockets of his trousers, were by no means comfortable.

"Come, sonny," suddenly resounded a voice close beside him. "don't stand there freezing in the cold; get inside where you belong!" "You ain't a cop?" answered Bert, looking strangely toward the speaker.

"No, I know I ain't a cop," answered the man, "but I'm the next thing to a cop. I'm the sexton, and my word goes around here just the same as a cop's; so you get inside. It's a long time for the Mass to begin, anyway."

Bert felt that there was some great mistake, but he stepped in as the stranger had bidden him. It was such a relief from the hard, crisp morning air! The smell of the steam heat was delightful, and yet Bert felt that it was not rightly for him to enjoy; it seemed to regard himself as a piffler, and still he wondered that no one detected him and ordered him to leave.

"Go up and sit with the children, my boy," said another kindly voice near him, and Bert sauntered up the aisle, his heart all a-trob with nervousness. No one else took the slightest notice of him; he sat down in a pew with several other youngsters, casting curious eyes himself around the big edifice, glancing up at the statues along the high walls, at the many pictures, too, that hung there, and at the towering altar, with its candles and candelabra, all ablaze. Everything was new and splendid and theatrical to Bert, and as no one came to turn him out he quietly determined that he would stay and see everything through to the end. He was happy to be in the companionship of so many silent, un-molested people; and the coziness of the place made him think he was getting the richest of luxuries for nothing.

The service began, and Bert watched it eagerly, marveling what it all could mean. He listened with rapt ears to the choir; he drank in the words of the priest's instruction, and when all was over, Bert lingered in the seat after the rest, wondering quietly what next would occur and speculating as to whether any one would come and turn him out.

A man seated in a long, black trailing robe, such as Bert had never seen before, bent down to the latter.

"Well, my little man, which class are you in?" "I dunno."

"Stranger, here are you?" "Yessir."

"Where do you live?" "Down Emmett street."

"Well, that's in this parish all right. What exact class are you in?" "Dunno."

"Have you learned all your prayers so as to say them perfectly?" "No, sir."

"Well, you'd better start in and learn them before we send you up higher, don't you think so?" "I dunno."

"Well, I think you had. Come I'll put you through the proper seat. Here, take this catechism by the way. You be here every Sunday without fail hereafter—understand?" "Yes, sir."

"And they always wait for Sunday-school when the Mass is over."

"Yes, sir."

"Now you won't forget it, will you?" "No, sir."

Bert was as good as his promise, and so every Sunday he returned to St. Peter's church, where he renewed the transports of that first morning. He was a quick learner, and seemed, indeed, such a conscientious lad that the teacher pushed him rapidly ahead, and so it turned out that before the year's end, Bert was ranged among the children of the first communion class.

It was only then that he suddenly realized things in all their full momentousness.

Father Halpin, he said one day to the priest in charge. "I don't think I can go to confession, can I?" "Certainly, my child, why not?" "I ain't no Catholic."

"No Catholic! Why, of course you are, and a mighty good little one that. You never miss Mass or Sunday school, do you?" "Oh, no; always come, because you know I said I would."

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and she wants the book; here's the dollar she gave me to buy it with." The boy's thin face grew whiter, and at length, one spring day, when the birds were chirping on the linden trees young Bert Tibbs died.

Father Halpin felt within his soul a deep and sincere sorrow as he thought of the young sufferer's death, and yet that grief of the priest was tempered with something like a celestial joy. A few days after the funeral, Father Halpin, who had been so long a curate at St. Peter's happened to get an appointment to Sag Harbor, as rector of one of the seaside parishes. It was far out at the last point of Long Island, far away from city bustle and city jars. There a year passed with its engrossing works, and finally, one day in the following Lent, he came up to St. Peter's to preach a Lenten instruction for his old pastor, Father Brignoli.

After saying his Mass at the high altar next morning he turned in to see Father Brignoli in the latter's study. "I thought I saw Mrs. Clement Burdock at Mass sitting in the front seat this morning," he mentioned.

"Oh, yes; she doesn't live far from here, you know."

"But how happens it that she comes to Mass?" "I don't know; same as any other Christian, I suppose."

"Then she can't be quiet as black as she used to be? Why haven't you heard about Mrs. Burdock?" "I've heard nothing at all since I left Brooklyn. What about her?"

"Why, we received her into the Church some seven or eight months ago—an excellent woman, devout, strong charactered, and the very son of charity."

"And to what does she attribute her conversion?" "Well, that's the strangest part of it; she says it was a copy of the Cardinal's book which first turned her towards the Catholic Church, and she tells me, too, that she bought it from a ragged street urchin. He must have been an angel in disguise!"

"Ah! I remember it all now! Poor young Bert Tibbs; I'm as sure he's an angel by this time, but an angel without any disguise."—Joseph Gordian Daley, in the Catholic Transcript.

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