

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

THE CULTIVATION OF CATHOLIC CHARACTER

By William H. Sloan, M. A., in the Missionary

There appears, to many people, no cause why the Creator should not have orchards of ripe fruit at their back doors, so that everybody, rich and poor, might feel that all the fruit they desired was there; and, without any task of planting the shoots, or cultivating, or pruning, or spraying, pick the fruit off the trees, and preserve as much as they require. But Divine Providence does not dispense its gifts in such a manner. Certain fruits are adapted to certain soils and climates. We may study and toil long and raise no fruit of virtue; we must study and toil laboriously to raise any.

And it is almost the same with the upbuilding of character. We must study to ourselves: Am I willing to study and toil as a fruit-grower does? Have I chosen the proper soil for my enterprise; and are my mules and plows in good condition; my nursery stock free from crown-gall and aphid and San Jose scale; and my laborers skilled in their duties; and my spraying outfit in prime working order? And holding the metaphor to a greater length, even at price of weariness—for it is a very fitting one—the fruit we are laboring for being a strong character, its cultivation is its orchard, which we have to watch and care for in order that the fruit will be in abundance and be sound. And the proper soil is our surroundings, our habits, and our companions; our skilled laborers are our temporal and spiritual advisers, and our own conscience. It is useless to attempt to acquire character without that proper soil and those skilled laborers; even with these we will have to be ever watchful over ourselves, the places we frequent, the friends we make, and listen to the voice of God speaking through the voice of conscience and from the mouth of our superiors, before our life will be consonant with all that is right and noble.

Any one who has visited limestone caves has noticed the stalactite pillars, sometimes large and massive, by which they were adorned and supported. They are nature's masonry of solid rock, formed by her own slow, silent, but mysterious process. The little drop of water percolates through the roof of the cave and deposits its sediment, and another follows it, till the icicle of stone is formed; and finally, reaching the rock beneath, it becomes a solid pillar, a marble monument, which can only be rent down by the most powerful forces.

But is there not going forward oftentimes in the caverns of the human heart a process as silent and effective, yet infinitely more momentous? There in the darkness that shrouds all from the view of the outward observer, each thought and feeling, as light and inconspicuous perhaps as the little drop of water, sinks downward into the soul, and deposits—yet in a form almost imperceptible—what we may call its sediment. And then another and another follows, till the traces of all combined become more manifest, and at length, if these thoughts and feelings are charged with the sediment of worldliness and worldly passion, they have reared within the spirit permanent and perhaps everlasting monuments of their effects. All around the walls of this spiritual cave stand in massive proportions the pillars of sinful inclinations and the props of iniquity, and only the convulsion like that which rends the solid globe can rend them from their place and shake their hold.

Thus stealthily is the work done; mere fancies and desires and lusts, unsuspectedly entertained, contribute silently and surely to the result. The heart is changed into an impregnable fortress of sin. The roof of its iniquity is sustained by marble pillars, and all the weight of reason and conscience and the Divine threatenings are powerless to lay it low in the dust of humility and contrition.

Such is the power of those light fancies and imaginations and desires which enter the soul unobserved, and are slighted for their insignificance. They attract no notice. They utter no note of alarm. We might suppose that if left to themselves they would be absorbed in oblivion, and leave no trace behind. But they form the pillars of character. They sustain the soul against the pressure of all those solemn appeals of right and truth to which it ought to yield.

How impressive, then, the admonition: "Keep thy heart with all diligence!" (Prov. ii:2.) Things which seem powerless and harmless may prove noxious beyond expression. The power of inveterate sin is from the silent flow of thought. Our habitual desires or fancies are shaping our eternal destiny.

Check them at the first appearance. If they bear upon them a palpable mark of sin, bestow not upon them the honor of an examination. If the leprosy appear in their foreheads, thrust them, as did Uzziah, out of the temple; or, as David answered his wicked solicitors, "Depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God." Though we cannot hinder them from haunting us, yet we may from lodging in us. The very sparkling of an abominable emotion in our hearts is as little to be looked upon as is the color of wine in a glass by a man inclined to drunkenness. Quench these emotions in-

stantly, as you would do a spark of fire in a heap of straw. We must not treat with them. St. Paul's resolve is a good pattern, not to parley with flesh and blood (Gal. i:16). We do not debate whether we should shake a viper off our hands.

I think that we may assert that in a hundred men there are more than ninety who are what they are—good or bad, useful or pernicious to society—from the instruction they have received. It is an education that depend the great differences observable among them. The least and most imperceptible impressions received in our infancy have consequences very important, and of a long duration. It is with these first impressions as with a river, whose waters we can easily turn, by different canals, in quite opposite courses; so that from the insensible direction the stream receives at its source, it takes a different destination and at last arrives at a place far distant from that it might otherwise have reached. And with the same facility we may turn the minds of children to what direction we please.

Youth is that period in which, if you would educate men, they must be educated. If they are not educated then, they will not be educated, and no regret or repentance can change the fact. When the plates are prepared for steel engravings, the steel is first cast soft; and then the engraver easily works out the picture. After that the plates are put into a furnace and brought to great hardness, so that impressions can be taken off by the hundreds without wearing it. Now, the time to engrave men is youth, when the plate is soft and ductile. Manhood is hard, and cannot be cut easily, any more than tempered steel.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

A great many boys and girls, as well as men and women, are often heard to say, "I would certainly do this and that and the other thing—if I only had the money."

Do not imagine that if you have money you are going to do anything great for mankind, if you did not do it before. And so, if you cherish a dream of becoming rich and building a hospital for the poor, or founding an orphan asylum, or feeding the hungry, the probability is that none of these beautiful thoughts will ever be carried into execution. It is poverty that brings out the goodness in most people. All the great doors for the human race recognized this. The Christ-Child lived a poor life; he had nowhere to lay His head, and, too, Christ laid down poverty as a condition for following him closely.

All of the saints, especially those founders of religious orders, that have done so much to alleviate the sufferings of mankind, recognized that all good things are born in poverty. And, too, from a purely human point of view, money does not bring success. It brings sorrow and scandal and notoriety, but it does not bring success. For success means getting the best out of life, in the right sense.

The great masters of the ages, had they not felt the bitter stings of poverty, would never have produced the great poems, the wonderful dramas and beautiful operas they have left to the world. It was in poverty, bitter, painful poverty, that they brought them forth.

And so, dear boys and girls who are reading this, do not make up your mind that you are going to grow up and be rich. Make up your mind that you are going to grow up and give God and your fellow men the best that is in you. It is true that you may not have much to give, but nevertheless give. First of all give to God. Give him your heart and soul; then give to your parents, give them your love and your respect; and then give to your fellow men, give them your service. Do not refuse to do a good act to anyone. Remember you may not have a chance to do the same tomorrow, and life which is only a few days and a few tomorrows will soon be over. Then it will be a matter of small amount to you whether or not you leave gold for your friends and relatives to fight over.

And so now begin to live a successful life—a life that is honest and pure, a life that is blessed with work well done, a life that is spent for the purchasing of what God intended it should purchase—eternal happiness.—Extension Magazine.

WHAT HE COULD DO

Two boys left home with just money enough to take them through college. They both did well at college, took their diplomas in due time and got from members of the faculty letters to a large ship-building firm with which they desired employment. When the first boy was given an audience with the head of the firm he presented his letters.

"What can you do?" asked the president.

"I should like some sort of clerkship."

"Well, sir, I will take your name and address, and if we have anything of the kind I will write to you."

"O," said the superintendent, "he did his work so well that I put him over the gang."

In two years that young man was the head of a department and on the way to a salary larger probably than his friend will ever earn.—Youth's Companion.

FIXING UP HER ROOM

A young girl received a bequest from a friend of the family, a beautiful water color, tastefully framed. She hung it on the wall of her room which was like the rooms of many schoolgirls. There were a good many school penants on the walls, and posters in glaring colors, and the other pictures in the room were largely colored prints of drawings by popular artists. The walls were so covered that it was hard to make a place for the chaste little landscape in the gilt frame.

One day an older friend came to spend the day with the family and the daughter of the house took her to her room to remove her wraps. As she smoothed her hair before the mirror, she caught sight of the picture on the wall, the latest arrival.

"Oh," she exclaimed admiringly, "what a little gem that water color is!"

"Yes, isn't it pretty?" the girl replied. And then after a moment she went on rather discontentedly: "Somehow I don't like my room as well as I did. I fixed it up last fall and all the girls thought it lovely. But now—"

She stood looking around her, a puzzled expression on her face.

"I believe there are too many things on the walls," she exclaimed. "It looks cluttered."

"The friend smiled a little. "I think you could spare a few of those penants," she agreed. "Any posters too. It would be more restful without quite so much on the walls."

The girl caught eagerly at the word.

"Yes," she exclaimed, "restful. That's exactly what it isn't."

The next time the friend dropped in she took especial pains to visit the room where the beautiful landscape hung on the wall. She found quite a change since her last visit. Many of the posters had disappeared. About the water color the wall was left comparatively clear, so the attention of one entering the room was at once attracted by it.

"I see," the caller commented, "that you've been making changes here."

"Yes," the girl acknowledged. "It's improved, don't you think?"

And then she added with decision: "But it's not quite what I want yet."

When next the friend saw the little room it had changed almost beyond belief. The walls had been repapered; hung against the delicately tinted background, the water color dominated the room. There were a few other pictures on the wall, and those, though not so fine, were in harmony with the larger picture. A framed photograph of one of Raphael's Madonnas, and etching of a fishing boat in a harbor and one or two other similar scenes were all. The little room had become beautifully peaceful. Its entire atmosphere had seemed to change.

"Why," cried the visitor looking around her, "you've had your room re-furnished, haven't you?"

The girl shook her head.

"No," she said. "Nothing is new but the wall-paper and one or two pictures. Getting rid of all those other things made the difference."

And it seemed to her friend as she looked at her that the young girl's face reflected the change in her surroundings.

The incident is typical of what happens often in a life. A new influence enters it. Perhaps it is a friendship. Perhaps a book one has read or a sermon one has heard starts a new train of thought.

And gradually the whole life changes in conformity to that influence. Things that seemed desirable before lose their glamor. Standards are changed. For if the good and the beautiful are given but a foothold, they will prove stronger than that which is tasteless and common, and continue their uplifting work till they have come to dominate the life.—Catholic News.

CONVERSION OF A FAMOUS ENGLISH WRITER

The reception of the Rev. John Charles Cox, LL. D., F. S. A., into the Church at Downside Abbey, is a piece of news which will be read with interest by those who know his work on ecclesiastical subjects:

Born in 1843, and educated at Repton School and Queen's College, Oxford, he has been a keen life-long student of all that pertains to English parochial life, its churches and organization, especially in the mediæval period. Archaeological research has been at once his life-work and recreation, and a long list of works attests his industry and enthusiasm, and has won for him a position as an acknowledged authority whom few would care to dispute. A former editor of the Reliquary, the Antiquary, and the Derbyshire Archaeological Journal, he is also the editor of Messrs. Methuen's series of Antiquary's Books, to which his friend Cardinal Gasquet was a contributor, and for which he has himself written histories of England, churchwardens' accounts, sanctuaries, and the English parish church.

THE CHIEF CHARM OF LOVELY WOMAN

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NORAH WATSON, 86 Drayton Ave., Toronto, Nov. 10th, 1915.

At dealers or sent postpaid on receipt of price by Fruit-a-tives Limited, Ottawa.

What is the duty of the citizen or subject when his government is actually engaged in war? We may answer, in general terms, that when a nation declares war, the war is a law of the land, and binds the subject to the same extent and for the same reason as any other law of the land. The whole question is simply a question of the obligation of the citizen to obey the law. So far as the subject is bound to obey the law, so far he is bound to render the aid in prosecuting the war the government commands him to render, and in the form in which it commands it.

If the government leaves it optional with the citizen whether to take an active part in the war or not, he is unquestionably bound to remain passive, if he believes the war to be unjust. But the subject, though entertaining doubts about the justice of a given war in its incipient stages, believing his government too hasty in its proceedings, and not so forbearing as it might and should have been, yet after the war has been declared, after his country is involved in it, can retreat only by suffering grievous wrongs, and seeks now to advance only for the purpose of securing a just and lasting peace, may, no doubt, even volunteer his active services, if he honestly believes them to be necessary; for the war now has changed its original character, has ceased to be aggressive, and become defensive and just. In such a case, love of country, and the general duty of each citizen to defend his country, to preserve its freedom and independence overrides the scruples he felt with regard to the war in its incipient stages, and enables him to take part in it with a safe conscience. But, however this may be, it is clear that when the government has actually declared war, and actually commands the services of the subject, he is bound in conscience, whatever may be his private convictions of the justice of the war, to render them, on the ground that he is bound in conscience to obey the law. If he takes part in obedience to the command of the government, he takes part, even though his private conviction is against the war, with a good conscience; because the motive from which he acts is not to prosecute a war he does not regard as just, but to obey his sovereign, which he is not at liberty not to do, and which he must do for conscience sake.

Our great danger lies in the radical tendency which has become so wide, deep and active in the American people. We have, to a great extent, ceased to regard anything as sacred or venerable; we spurn what is old; we against what is fixed; and labor to set all religious, domestic and social institutions afloat on the wild and tumultuous sea of speculation and experiment. Nothing has hitherto gone right; nothing has been achieved that is worth retaining, and man and Providence have thus far done nothing but commit one continued series of blunders. All things are to be reconstructed; the world is to be recast, and by our own wisdom and strength. We must borrow no light from the past, adopt none of its maxims, and take no data from its experience.

There is much to strengthen this radical tendency. Political aspirants reckless of principle and greedy of place, appeal to it as their most facile means of success; and the mass of the people, finding their passions flattered and their prejudices undisturbed, are thrown off their guard, presume it is all right, and cherish unconsciously the enemy that is to destroy them. A fictitious public opinion grows up, becomes supreme, to which whoever wishes for some consideration in the community in which he lives must offer incense, and which he must presume on no occasion to contradict. The majority of the people, indeed, may not be represented by this opinion—may, it is true, not approve it; but they are isolated one from another, minding each their own affairs, and ignorant of their numbers and strength; while the few, by their union, mutual acquaintance, concert, and clamor, are able to silence any single voice not raised in adulation of their idol. Political parties conspire to the same end. One party to-day, ambitious of success, courts this fictitious public opinion as a useful auxiliary, and succeeds; the other must do so tomorrow, or abandon all hopes of succeeding. Then follows a strife of parties, which shall bid highest, and outtraded the other.

With such a tendency, wide and deep, strong and active, we cannot but apprehend the most serious dangers. With it there can be no permanent institutions, no government, no society, no virtue, no well-being.—New World.

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