

## Chats with Young Men

Before proceeding with my subject for this week I have a little secret to communicate to my readers. Each of you must have noticed that when writing in the various themes dealt with hitherto in these Chats I have approached them with the air of one authorized to do so by his wide experience in the ways of men, or of one, at least, basing his admonitions on the groundwork of sager counsels. I would fain continue to reap the benefit of this fond delusion, if such it has been, only that I fear discovery in the present issue, seeing that I select for treatment Tact, a theme for the discussion of which I feel so inadequate that I seek as my only reward for writing on it the sweetness that comes from open confession, and that wisely, too, before my boldness is disclosed. Yet, if anything I say shall awaken young men to the importance of this mystic grace I shall have a second and greater reward in having planted early in their garden of success an ornamental tree which, cultivated and pruned through life, will often lend its subtle shades to hide their failings from the ardor of public scrutiny.

What is tact? Rather what is it not? It is everything, so multi-form are the means it employs to turn a bad situation to advantage. It is a peculiar gift ever on the alert which prompts men having a losing cause to say an apt word, maintain a studious silence, shift an affirmed position, yield a contested point, or adopt some such means of ready resource which will either turn victory to their side or gain for them the most that opportunity and appropriate tactics could procure. From this it is evident that the weapons of tact are wielded with force proportionate to one's ability to seize a situation or read the minds against which those weapons are directed. Certain it is, then that to be tactful one must be wide awake, observant, quick to judge and penetrating. A knowledge of human nature, too, embracing as it does a familiarity with the lines along which men think, their associations of ideas, the influences which bear on them, the glitter that appeal to them, the vanities that lurk in them, and which cause them to stumble over cracks,—this knowledge is dark-lantern to the tactful man.

Is tact a gift of nature or the fruit of cultivation and study? To be sure nature holds all degrees of it in her gift. She endows some men so liberally that their tact covers a multitude of defective measures of more substantial qualities. Hence it is that sometimes we see men of tact great leaders, while men having better brains hold the rank of lieutenants and do the real work and brilliant thinking. But tact is more often the reward of observation and conscious effort. Even nature's contribution may be better be considered an extraordinary aptitude for improving by experience. At any rate we are concerned more with the means of cultivating tact and will devote our remarks to that issue.

How is tact to be cultivated? That can hardly be answered in a general way. The means to be adopted differ with individuals. One is of a nervous or excitable temperament and approaches persons in a blundering, fermenting way, which betrays lack of confidence in one's own proposal. That person should think out a very terse simple form of presenting his proposition so as not to have words defeating his earnest attempts to gather together and control his nerves. Another person tends to volubility. He should take a like exercise to impress his auditors with the value of time to all concerned. In actual dealings, however, tact is more often called in where differences or obstacles exist. Tact is patient. It waits until the other person is finished speaking so that thought may be indulged in while that person is disclosing his position and proposition. Where obstacles exist and either or both sides must advance to their removal tact elicits the best offer the other person will make and, with that as a standing proposition, offers a plausible counter-proposition smacking of fairness but yielding

less its purpose to secure a small advantage. Here too comes in penetration. Dispositions play a significant part in bargains. Some men will discuss, but will not argue; others will argue and will dispute. If it is to your advantage to conclude a deal in some way, it is therefore well to know when to seal a bargain. Again, when tempers are aroused much tact is required. What form it should take depends on your insight into the situation; with some men you will find it well to appear calm, and at other times a trifle startled; with others your point will be gained by manifesting a little mettle, always, of course, keeping control of your reason. When your silence permits an opponent to think in favor of your proposition, be silent; when your talk holds his thoughts in your favor, talk; or when even your words confuse him or prevent his thinking against you, still talk. Tact thus is a weapon of art.

There is, however, a broader and gentler task for the exercise of this precious gift. It is that of holding friends and organizing and leading men. So often do misunderstandings arise and actual grievances loom up between friends, allies and members of the same party that it requires an alert and versatile tempered mind to keep all within their ranks. A look, a word, a smile, a timely concession or apology,—all are secrets of strength with those who retain their friends or lead parties.

Enough points have been hinted at, however, to lay bare to my readers the necessity of cultivating tact. All I would emphasize now is the necessity of diligent self-study and rigid self-discipline in order to improve this most necessary weapon of success. When you fail to gain a point, you usually can see on reflection where you might have bettered your case by some word or tactic. When a similar opportunity presents itself, avail yourself of the judgment you pronounced upon your last failure and adopt a different method. When finally, from many failures you learn a successful treatment for a situation, you have made a conquest in the mastery of tact. By persevering endeavor and by constant observation of the methods employed to gain their points, by men of every craft and condition, you will be able to adapt the fruits of your observation to your own necessities.

In conclusion I must express the hope that no young man feels that effort along this line can fail to achieve the desired results. The most awkward in manner and speech, by persevering study, may become graceful and tactful. Moreover, the knowledge of one's self thus gained is a source of strength and confidence, a contributor of force to character. There is no need for rush,—years await your perseverance, each with its weight of experience. If you have acquired a fair degree of tact by the time you have reached manly years, success is almost assured you. Whether you enter mercantile or professional life or aspire to leadership in the field of politics, and even if you are content with the more simple, more happy and more quiet paths of private life, tact will smooth your path. FINEM RESPICE.

### MINERAL WATER IN FORM OF ICE.

A novel project has been put forth in Wisconsin for the sale in the form of ice of mineral water, and a company has been formed to exploit it. It is proposed to dispose of the water in this form so as to save to the consumer the cost of the ice ordinarily bought to cool the various mineral waters as sold now in bottles and cans. Ordinarily the ice to cool mineral waters, as kept in tanks, business offices, clubs, hotels and homes, costs more than the water itself, and it is proposed to cut in half the cost of water, ice and freight and distributing charges. The idea is not a new one, having been proposed several years ago, when a company was almost upon the point of forming to carry it out. In the first place, ice will be made of the spring water, retaining all the original mineral properties, the water melting in the consumer's tank and returning to its natural form as pure as when taken from the spring. The ice can be furnished, it is declared, at less cost than the water, as the

cost of shipping ice from the Wisconsin lakes to Milwaukee and Chicago is 3½ cents a hundred pounds, while the cost of shipping water is 7 cents for the same weight. The ice, it is claimed, will be as valuable as a refrigerant as any ice, and in the home will do service in the ordinary family refrigerator, the melting ice furnishing pure water for drinking purposes, if the ice chamber is kept clean, and for the same price as ice manufactured from distilled water.

### STARVED VENEZUELAN SOLDIERS.

By A. Pasteur in January Donahoe's.

From my hotel in Caracas I could see the ragged starved boys called soldiers, bearing the yellow government flag of Castro, symbol of a pest-house rather than of a civilized government. The people of South America must eventually tire of revolution and corrupt government. Already the men on the streets in Barcelona, La Guayra, Caracas, Valencia and the rich cities of Venezuela are grumbling over the internal and interminable revolutions. Under the aegis of the Monroe Doctrine the Venezuelans take every kind of advantage both of America and Europe. They know we will never allow a European country to take an aggressive attitude or proceed to colonize in the western hemisphere; they also are adepts at the diplomatic art of playing off one government against another. The Turk alone is equal to the Venezuelan statesman in the fine art of international deceit.

### A FAMOUS CONVERT.

By Rev. Thomas I. Gasson, S.J., in January Donahoe's.

Paul Bourget, another famous convert, a descendant of a Russian father and of an English mother, was born in the busy city of Amiens, in 1852. Bourget was noted in his early youth for an enthusiastic love of travel and for an insatiable desire of reading. He enjoyed nothing more than visiting different cities, studying their history, their monuments, and the local peculiarities of the people. At the same time he was an omnivorous reader, and was nearly always seen with a book in his hand or under his arm. He was especially fond of English and French poetry, of fiction and of philosophy. At the College de Sainte Barbe in Paris, he carried off several prizes on account of his excellence in writing and of his thorough scholarship.

He entered the arena of letters as a writer of poems. "La Vie inquiete" was not a success, it was stilted in style, and superficial in conception. In 1883 he publishes "Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine." This immediately made him famous. It struck the popular fancy and was greeted with approval by the critics. He added fresh laurels to those already won by "Nouveaux Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine" and by "Études et Portraits."

### PROTESTANTISM.

The following acrostic is reproduced from the "Living Church," leading organ of the "advanced party" in the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country:—

Poor profession, mere denial,  
Rising not above negation;  
Of no use in time of trial,  
Tearing Church, befouling Nation,  
Ever carping, sniffing, snarling,  
Scenting wrong in all that's right;  
Truth thy bugbear, strife thy darling,  
Always butting black for bright,  
Now protesting, now reviling,  
Tampering with the Church's name,  
Indolent, on error smiling,  
Seeming dead to Christian shame,  
Most un-Christian is thy fame.

Many works seem full of charity; but as the order of discretion is not in them, so God is not in them.—St. Antoninus.

Ah, if you knew how to pray, and if you loved to pray, how good, useful, fruitful and meritorious would be your life.

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