

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

"IF I MAY CALL YOU FRIEND"

If I may call you friend, I wish you this— No gentle destiny throughout the years, No soft content, or ease, or unearned bliss, Bereft of heartaches where no sorrow nears, But rather rugged trouble for a mate To mould your soul against the coming blight, To train you for the ruthless whip of fate And bind your heart up for the bitter fight. If I may call you friend, I wish you more— A more philosophy no man may fake, To put the game itself beyond the score And take the tide of life as it may break; To make the struggle that a man should know Before he comes through with the winning hit, And, though you slip before the charging foe, To love the game too well to even quit. If I may call you friend, I wish this, too, As you grope blindly out the narrow beat, That you may have one old-time dream come true, This is one more than most men ever meet; That you will hold this a worthy prize For all the traps with which the course was lined, Not scorning it with too ambitious eyes That look for something you can never find.

PEACE ON EARTH

Emerson tells us that a brief visit to the land of solitude is of the greatest advantage to the man who has long dwelt amid the roar and traffic of the market-place and the street. Plunged in the waters of silence, man will afterward be enabled to encounter the dangers of life's warfare with greater sanity and courage, and will possess tranquillity which cannot be overthrown. "Why must the student be solitary and silent? That he may become acquainted with his thoughts. If he pines in a lonely place hankering for the crowd and for display, he is not in the lonely place. His heart is in the market. He does not see; he does not hear; he does not think. But go, cherish your soul. Expel companions; then will your faculties rise fair and full within. It is the noble manlike thought which is the superiority demanded of you, and not crowds but solitude, confers the elevation." Another year has come to a close, bringing with it a train of memories. Many things have happened during the past twelve months, some for good; others for ill, but all calculated to bring peace to men if rightly interpreted. The best things are old adage—"The best things are last"—and surely, of all gracious blessings of the year, Christmas is the best and sweetest. So this Christmas has been kept sacredly hidden from us until the Old Year is fairly spent. The modern preparation for Christmas is somewhat strenuous even though it be undertaken in a spirit of generosity and of sacrifice. The past weeks have been fraught with anxious thought for many, for it is our modern custom to worry about the best things as well as the worst. So Christmas, the Feast of Peace, is not always unattended by solicitous cares and vain regrets because things may not be otherwise. But now all this has been left behind, like the chain of the passing months of the Old Year. The grown folks have done their best in order that Christmas may be a joyful festival for others. The children have whispered the last of their stupendous little secrets into the ear of Santa Claus, with perfect trust that their faith will be rewarded on the great Day of Days. The whole world revolves about a doll or a pair of skates; a new sled is a more momentous possession than empires in foreign lands. The scent of evergreens grows on the nostrils, in the shops and market-places, and slow processions of Christmas trees move through the streets, acclaimed with shouts of joy by the little ones who are soon to be entranced by their vision of glittering beauty. After the stress and burden of the past weeks, we have a right to solitude in order to prepare for the real significance of Christmas, which is not what we give to one another by way of expressing our friendship and love, but what was given to all men nearly two thousand years ago on the first Christmas, a little Child in a Manger Who came out of love from Heaven to earth. A modern writer tells us that the land of solitude is a term incognita, an unknown land in this our feverish age. But it is a land so replete with delights that it will well repay a visit and there is a certainty that the chance visitor straying within this enchanted boundary, will not fail to come again. The world around us presents the spectacle of men engaged in a

breathless struggle for money, power, of pleasure "which they pursue at a pace which keeps them stretched out on the rack of this tough world, and finally kills them." The modern disease of feverish unrest numbers its victims by thousands, and men nowadays are sold into veritable slavery by their subjection to the craving of their senses and their ignorance of any world but the external one which their eyes see. In the retreat of the soul there are pleasant ways, paths "redolent of peace, serene musings and fair thoughts dwell therein as in their native home, and peace wells up from silent depths like waters of a spring that rise hiddenly from the secret reservoirs of the earth."

In the Manger of Bethlehem there is an antidote for all this distress and unrest which is eating the heart out of even good Christians. When the bustle and the anxiety of the exterior preparation is over, there is need of interior preparation when, alone before the representation of the Infant Saviour, men may pause and think. The Infant eyes shine, but not with the restless greed of the world and its fleeting treasures. In those guileless depths is only a great love, surpassing the love-light in the tenderest of human eyes, even that of a mother as she contemplates her child. The tiny hands stretched out from her bed of straw are not seeking to embrace the riches of the world; they do not grope for the treasures of gold. They seek to embrace all men in their clasp. The simple bed of the Infant rebukes the luxuriant desires of those whose god is comfort and who, while they jealously guard the body, care little for the gem which it contains the soul.

As earthly friends wait sometimes through a whole year for a visit or a letter from one beloved, as they look forward eagerly to some anniversary when they know that one at a distance will recall them with loving thought, so the Infant Saviour waits all through the year for this, His Own peculiar festival of Christmas. When the world is filled with Christmas, when the universal salutations of the most exalted of men recall His Birth, He knows that there are few who will disregard the call. In the city streets and in newly-dedicated public squares hang silent testimonials, sometimes bearing foreign names, sacred to the memory of the youth of our country who will spend their Christmas beneath the soil of a distant land. Loving hands have reverently placed their tributes of evergreen and red ribbons above the names of those who gave their lives that the great blessing of peace might dwell in our midst.

Our Holy Father, speaking recently of the Treaty of Peace, said that there were yet many souls divided by dissensions and strangers to this sacred peace. But peace, he tells us, cannot come save through the individual effort of each one, striving after personal holiness in these restless times. This is the only way in which may be realized the great significance of Christmas, "peace on earth to men of good-will!"—The Pilot.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

FIND TIME OR MAKE IT

Opportunity tapped at the door With a chance for the brother within; He rapped till his fingers were sore, And muttered: "Come on, let me in; Here is something I know you can do. Here's a hill I know you can climb." But the brother inside very quickly replied: "Old fellow, I haven't got time." Opportunity wandered along In search of a man who would rise. He said to the indolent throng: "Here's a chance for the fellow who tries." But each of them said with a smile: "I wish I could do it, but I'm very busy. Very busy today, and I'm sorry to say That I really haven't got time." At last Opportunity came To a man who was burdened with cares, And said: "I now offer the same Opportunity that has been theirs. Here's a duty that ought to be done. It's a chance if you've got the time to take it." Said the man with a grin: "Come along, pass it in. I'll either find time, or I'll make it."

Of all the excuses there are By which this old world is accursed This "haven't got time" is by far The poorest, the feeblest, the worst. A delusion it is, and a snare; If the habit is yours, you should break it. For if you want to do what is offered to you You'll find time to do it or make it.

THE POWER OF RELIGION

When Victor Hugo was about twenty years of age, he sat conversing with the Abbe de Rohan one evening in the cell of the young prince, who had become a seminarian. As they talked a decrepit old priest entered. His head, which he had not strength to hold erect, dropped on his breast. He walked with a trembling step, lean-

ing heavily on his cane. His clothing was faded and threadbare, but his countenance was radiant. "You seem very happy," said the Abbe. "Has something pleasant happened to you?" "Yes," replied the venerable man. "I received 850 francs a year, as vicar of Saint Nicholas du Chardonnet. My salary has been cut to 450 francs. I thank God. I was afraid that I should lack time to be rested, being so near to death."

Victor Hugo looked closely at the man to see if he were pretending. His expression, however, gave evidence of perfect sincerity. Some days after, the Abbe de Rohan went to visit the poet and found him sad and worried. The caller made reference to the old priest. He said: "He is old, infirm, and poor. He had only a mere mouthful of food. Half of that was taken from him, and still he is cheerful. That is religion. My dear friend, if you see in it only a philosophy of life, is it not the very best of all? What other, I ask you, has power to turn our trials and misfortunes into real joys?"

WISDOM RATHER THAN KNOWLEDGE

My words are as sweet as honey to those who love My teaching and keep My Commandments. But to the proud, who despise My precepts and make use of their knowledge to sin, My voice is a tempest that roots up the cedars of Lebanon.

Iniquity triumphs only in misfortune, but justice triumphs in glory. The sinner is exalted only that he may fall from a greater height, but the just man is humbled that he may be exalted. In vain will the proud man hear My word; he shall not understand it. Only the humble man will hearken to it; he will find therein consolation. The more you practice virtue, the more you will delight in My words. The more the learned man delights in himself, the less he understands what My words reveal. He alone will understand Me well, he alone will know that it is I who speak to him, who, putting aside all vanity, will hunger after the truth of virtue and the virtue of truth. Science will be profitable to him, because all truth bears witness to My goodness and My wisdom. The humble man alone will be learned; the learned man, pure in heart, will be humble. Humility enlightens the intellect more than all the knowledge of men.

Listen faithfully to the Church, and your knowledge will increase by your knowledge that has come down from past ages and from God.—Rev. Gabriel Palau, S. J.

WHAT TEMPER REALLY IS

You know there are many young women—we hope those of more mature years have learned to know better—who take not a little pride in the fact that they have a very quick temper. They find it a very effective means of getting what they want from those in the home circle who would rather give them anything than get them into a tantrum. We have lately seen a new way of looking at temper that is not so flattering to the one possessed of it. It is probable that those who figuratively pat themselves on the back for their temper get it somewhat mixed up with a strong will, which it certainly is not. Perhaps when they begin to regard an uncontrollable temper as cruelty they will be well on the way to harnessing it and keeping it within bounds. The paragraph we found said this: "A great source of cruelty is temper. When it is considered what a vast world, how many homes are darkened and how many homes are saddened by it; when we remember that its persecutions have not even the purifying consequences of most other calamities inasmuch as its effects upon its innocent victims are rather cancerous than medicinal; when we call to mind what a bright face and a bright disposition are like sunshine in a house, and a gloomy, lowering countenance as depressing as an Arctic night, we must acknowledge that temper itself is only another form of cruelty, and a very bad form, too." So be careful of it—that temper of yours that flares up at the least provocation, and causes far more unhappiness than you have any idea of. It is one thing to laughingly say you have a quick temper and let it go at that and another to tell the truth and admit that you have allowed cruelty to plant its ugly roots in your character.—True Voice.

CARDINAL NEWMAN SPEAKING OUT

It was Cardinal Newman who spoke very strongly somewhere on the duty of Catholics to "speak out." I have found the passage and it is worth quoting, says a writer in the Southern Cross. "There is a time for silence and a time to speak. What I desiderate in Catholics is the gift of bringing out what their religion is; it is one of those 'better gifts' of which the Apostle bids you be zealous. You must not hide your talent in a napkin, or your light under a bushel. I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where

they stand, who know what they hold and what they do not, who know their creed so well that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity.

"I wish you to enlarge your knowledge, to cultivate your reason, to get an insight into the relation of truth to truth, to learn to view things as they are, to understand how faith and reason stand to each other, what are the bases and principles of Catholicism, and where lie main inconsistencies and absurdities of the Protestant theory.

"You ought to be able to bring out," he goes on to say, "what you feel and what you mean, as well as to feel it and mean it; to expose to the comprehension of others the fictions and fallacies of your opponents, and to explain the charges brought against the Church to the satisfaction, not indeed of bigots, but of men of sense of whatever cast of opinion."

IRISH COURTESY

The rising generation in Ireland inherits a long tradition of good manners and geniality attributes which are commended in the "Itinerary of Prince Alfred," and which, nearly twelve hundred years later, moved Sir Walter Scott to write of the Irish: "I said their poverty was not exaggerated; neither is their wit, nor their good humor. There is perpetual kindness in the Irish cabin."

What Alfred found, and Sir Walter found, and hundreds of chroniclers in between have found, you will find today in the elders of the Irish people, an instinctive courtesy, friendliness, consideration and tact, that might set an example to many a diplomat "the butter coming through the strabout," as the homely old proverb has it. It is simply impossible to conceive them condescending to a display of that unqualified rudeness which just at present distinguishes the youth of Europe. Far too often does one encounter the juvenile glories in being aggressive, contradictory and surly, who disdains his seat please or thank you, or to lift his hat to a woman, who butts into crowded tramcars in front of old people carrying heavy parcels and goads the over-driven restaurant waitress to reciprocal incivility. So far it is only a few of the very immature among the Irish nation who show any leaning towards the noisier cult, but why, one asks, should even one Irish boy or girl follow a bad alien example, when there is a super-excellent national standard? Why wear Irish tweed and discard Irish manners?

Almost every expression in daily use a few years ago bespoke a kindly thought: "God bless the work," "God save all here." "That the journey may prosper with you." These and a dozen other phrases like them, were commonplace of Irish country life twenty years ago. If Irish children deliberately turn aside from the spirit which prompted such speech, the world would be the poorer, and who will benefit? Certainly not Ireland!—Miriam Alexander in Dublin Independent.

VOCATIONS

In beginning another scholastic year, our young people should make up their minds to put to good use the time allotted to them for study; and always with a view to perfecting themselves in all things necessary to their vocation in life. A neglect of this duty results in the many worthless men and women today who have missed their vocations and whose lives are miserable in consequence.

The mind of youth as it develops, manifests various aptitudes; and so long as opportunity be given to cultivate these aptitudes, so long will the child be in the way of attaining the place marked out for it. Some parents force the mind of the child into uncongenial channels and give it an education wholly unfit for its state in life. Catholic parents will often send their boys to school, to college, or the seminary, without first ascertaining whether or no they show signs of a vocation. They dedicated him to God in his infancy and feel that now their chief duty consists in making him a priest. By such means parents easily exert a contrary influence upon children and instead of leading them to the open road in life, they leave them bewildered in the darkness of a woods from which it is almost impossible to find an exit; and so they wander about confused through life. Let the holy Will of God work out the destiny of your child under the influence of religion. Not 11 men and women are called to the religious life; not all can be doctors, lawyers or mechanics; not all can save their souls in any one occupation. There is the grace of vocation; and to the father and mother belongs the duty of assisting to develop that vocation with the growing years. The boys and girls of today are to be the men and women of tomorrow; and on them will rest a great individual responsibility. Fathers and mothers, then, think seriously of your duty, and the account you will one day be obliged to render for the souls of your children. Prepare them for their state in life; force them not into occupations that they despise. Teach them that education and vocation are

simply means to be employed in attaining Eternal Life. We are not preaching, but talking hard common sense, as every intelligent parent can testify. Give your children a Christian education compatible with your means and happiness will result.—Michigan Catholic.

SOME HEARTENING STATEMENTS

An optimist is one who sees with unclouded vision the good and evil in the world and pins his faith on supernatural motives that good will ultimately prevail; a pessimist is one who looks downward at the earth, allowing the gloomy forebodings that rise from below to cloud his vision and clog his footsteps in the path of progress.

Some very heartening statements have recently been given forth from high dignitaries in the Church, who have given more than a passing thought to the subject, on the reasonableness of being optimists and the folly of being pessimists. His Eminence, the Cardinal, in his recent pastoral on Religious Ideals in Industrial Relations voiced his faith in these strong words: "It would be false optimism to say, 'All is well,' when we know that with the rapid growth of wealth the selfishness of men has kept pace; that the gap between rich and poor is constantly widening; that the very basis of society is being disrupted; that irreligion and infidelity are blasting away the very foundations of faith. Not with a wall of pessimism do we raise our voice but with affectionate warning. Modern paganism has done its work, but the God of our fathers is with us still. He will save us. We have but to put into practice the justice and charity of Christ. When Christian ideals rule the world, then and not till then, we shall have peace."

In a recent address in England Cardinal Bourne asked his hearers to look over the past and see the long periods of alarming unhealthiness, the great stretches of centuries in which the world was very sick. Such periods as the early pagan persecutions, the invasion of the barbarians, and the French Revolution passed, and regeneration followed. If mankind had given way to pessimism and relinquished the struggle, Christianity would not have triumphed, and God would have been restored life to the world when all seemed lost.

From far off India the Archbishop of Bombay has added his voice to the defence of optimism and the defeat of the pessimists. He said recently: "We human beings look around and do not see the good that has been done and is being done in spite of and in the midst of all the failures. We do not see the force for good that underlies it all, never killed though it has been crippled, rising from its wounds more alive than ever. Christianity is no accident; it is not one of the many phases through which a portion of the world has passed. It is a permanent uplifting; and it has power to uplift today as much as yesterday, in Asia as well as in Europe and America. What is more, the work is being done and gradually the whole mass is being leavened. Failures there are now as in the past. But as then, so now, these are neither the fruits nor the manifestations of Christianity; to judge it by them is the devil's own justice. There are other signs more true, more in accordance with her declared design; and these are growing every day, and will grow till the world is won."

Utterances such as these from such diverse quarters of the world from those who have the opportunity of accurate judgment, is stimulating in these anxious times. Such assurances of firm belief in Our Lord's promises to His Church at a time when Christianity is assailed by so many hostile critics are the best answer that can be given to those of little faith. They are in full accord with the attitude of the head of the Church.

The Holy See has had to bear much of the storm that has raged against Christianity, but even in moments when most fiercely attacked, no language is heard from the lips of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV., but words of hope and encouragement. The world sunk in dejection has much to remember, but it has also many lessons to learn. But it can learn them best by hearkening not to pessimists, but to its true leaders, men of true optimism based on faith and on Christ's infallible promises to His Church.—The Pilot.

HOW TO BEAR LITTLE WORRIES

In the first place, expect them. Make them the subject of our morning prayers, and say to ourselves: Here is my daily cross, do I accept willingly? Surely for it is God Who sends it. After all—these little troubles, looked at calmly, what are they? Ah, if there were never any worse! Secondly, we must be prepared for them. You know, if you wish to break down the force of a blow falling on you, you naturally bend the body; so let us act with regard to our souls. Accustom yourself, wrote a pious author, to stoop with sweet contentment, not only to exigencies (that is your duty) but to the simple

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wishes of those who surround you—the accidents which may intervene; you will find yourself seldom, if ever, crushed.

To bend is better than to bear; to bear is often a little hard; to bend implies a certain external sweetness that yields all constraint, sacrificing the wishes, even in holy things, when they tend to cause disagreements in the family circle. Submission often implies an entire resignation to all that God permits. The soul that endures feels the weight of its trouble. The soul that yields scarcely perceives it.—Exchange.

BETTER THAN GOLD

Better than gold is a thinking mind That in the realms of books can find A treasure surpassing Australian ore And live with the great and good of yore. The sage's lore and the poet's lay, The glories of empires passed away, The world's great dream will thus unfold And yield a pleasure better than gold. Better than gold is a peaceful home Where all the fireside character come. The shrine of love, the heaven of life, Hallowed by mother, or sister or wife, However humble the home may be, Or tried with sorrow by heaven's decree, The blessings that never were bought or sold, And center there, are better than gold. —FATHER ABRAHAM J. RYAN

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