

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

MY TASK

To love some one more dearly every day.
To help a wand'ring child to find his way.
To ponder o'er a noble thought and pray.
And smile when evening falls.
To follow Truth as blind men long for light.
To do my best from dawn of day till night.
To keep my heart fit for His Holy Sight.
And answer when He calls.

EMPTY HANDS

Man, born to labor, finds that the universal law pursues him everywhere and at all times. Early in life he endeavors to ascertain just what vocation in life he chooses to follow and by means of which he hopes to accumulate a store of treasure both abstract and material. Before he advances very far in the struggle, he realizes that two tremendous forces are contending within him. These forces wise and holy men have defined as nature and grace.

Within the breast of every man is a strong and seductive force which impels him to seek the gratification of his senses, to satisfy his ignoble ambitions and to pursue the desired success in the easiest possible way. He may have started out in life's morning determined to be honest, energetic, sincere, merciful. He soon discovers that earth's treasures are not most easily won when one walks a straight and narrow way. He sees other men achieving success by taking advantage of their fellows. He realizes that his progress is much slower than theirs, and discontent creeps into the secret places of his soul.

Long ago a wise man described this struggle between good and evil: "Grace cannot remain empty, but willingly embraces labor. It attends to eternal things, does not adhere to temporal things, is not disturbed by the loss of things, for its treasure is in Heaven where nothing perishes." And again: "Nature labors for its own interests, is unwilling to mortify itself, and awaits whatever advantage may come to it. Nature willingly receives honor, but Grace attributes all honor to God."

A mere glance at the condition of the world today will indicate clearly how few men follow the promptings of grace to the disadvantage of fallen nature. Most men adhere tenaciously to their possessions. Not only this, but in order to preserve them, to augment them, they soon consent to adopt subterfuges of conscience which in the beginning they would not dream of permitting themselves. Little by little the roar of the world drowns out the still sweet voice of conscience.

In the height of success, in the flash of manhood, they hear the subtle call of ignoble ambition, and shut their hearts to the warning of the Angel of God. Nature rises up stronger than grace, asserts its independence, tells a man that he is his own master. Fatal illusion, which he realizes too late! Whereas grace counsels him to recollect his duties as a creature to his Creator and to his fellow men. Blindly he rushes on, yes, madly, to destruction. He consents to take little chances, then greater ones, and in consequence, all is lost.

So it is that gray prison walls shadow the light and laughter and sunshine of many a man who was singularly blessed in the possession of all that makes life most dear and prized. No longer does the roar of commerce stifle the voice of the Good Angel. There is plenty of time and silence in which to think now, to listen now. But it is too late. God alone bears with man's transgressions, permits him an infinite number of chances even until the hour of death. His fellow-men deny him this boon. One serious relapse, and the strong arm of the law clutches him. It is then too late to reconsider or to reconstruct the course. In the dim dull years that lie before, separated from dear ones, shut away from the greenness of open fields, the breath and beauty of flowers, the faces of those whom he loved and who loved him, he who was a fastidious lover of all beauty, now finds himself stripped. And even more gray and dreary is the shadow that has fallen upon his soul than that which broods in the corners of his cell, in the grim shop where he makes shoes or garments all day long, or by the dusty roadside where with aching heart and soul at war, he breaks stones.

The struggle between nature and grace begins at the first dawn of reason. It continues unceasing until death stills the restless, agitated beating of the heart, closes the eyes that ranged so freely over sights and scenes of every description, halts the stumbling feet that traveled in ways too often edging the brink of the precipice.

Could man but realize the necessity of engaging with determination in this combat between the two contending powers within his being, it were well for him and for the world. But, alas, at the end of life, after feeble or careless resistance, too often he finds himself standing on the threshold of Eternity, with empty hands.

A holy man who had spent all his life in the pursuit of sanctity, was called to the bedside of one who

was about to die. This person had never grievously wronged another. Her life had been free from the grosser stains. But it had been colorless. In the direct contact with Eternity, she drew back in fright. For, although she was leaving behind her a beautiful mansion and many choice possessions, these things she was powerless to take into that mysterious realm whence the traveller no more returns.

Agitated by fear and remorse, she talked freely of her wasted life, of spent hours that she was powerless to recall. And her one fear resolved into the cry: "I am afraid to go with empty hands!"

Thereupon the wise and holy man placed in those delicate and carefully tended hands, those idle, useless hands, his own little Crucifix, saying tenderly: "My child, your hands are not empty now!"

The lesson appeals to the sensibilities, it touches deeply. And yet it is extremely painful to think that at the hour of supreme need, man is forced to face his eternal future with nothing in those marvelous hands, formed and fashioned to a thousand wondrous arts, but above all wrought to labor in the service of the Master who demands a strict account of his stewardship one day.

"Son," said a wise man long ago, speaking from his quiet corner, "carefully observe the various motions of nature and of grace, because they move in subtle manner and can not readily be discovered unless by the spiritual and interior man."

Nature labors for its own selfish interests, but grace for the interests of the immortal soul. Did men but struggle bravely, they need have no fear that in the evening of life's day they must find themselves before their Maker—with empty hands.—The Pilot.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

OTHERS

Lord help me to live from day to day
In such a self forgetful way,
That even when I kneel to pray,
My prayers shall be for others.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true,
And know that all I do for You
Must needs be done for "Others."

Let self be crucified and slain
And buried deep; and all in vain,
Its efforts be to rise again,
Unless to live for "Others."

And when my work on earth is done
And my new work in Heaven's begun,
May I forget the crown I've won,
While thinking still of "Others."

"Others," Lord, yes, "Others!"
Let this my motto be,
Help me to live for "Others"—
For then I live for Thee.

ACHIEVEMENT

Greatest gifts spring from the unexpected places of the earth. There is no rule whereby they may be looked for or measured. Amid conditions where everything remains to be achieved, true greatness is most often nourished and noble deeds are born to delight and inspire the world.

The poet has sung of the blacksmith, bending over his ruddy forge and striking from the glowing mass of iron the brilliant shower of sparks that leap up to beautify the commonplace scene. Upon his brow the drops of honest sweat stand bravely out. Now and then he pauses in his arduous labors to wipe them away. He sees the children of the village trooping home from school, merry-hearted and gay. He knows that in yonder tattered urchin may be the future statesman whose magnificent eloquence shall cause the bonds of nations to fall away.

Beyond the quiet street he does not look, but he knows that somewhere, this toil of his shall penetrate beyond these narrow confines. The blood of his ancestors, rugged men and devoted to duty, courses through his veins. His light-hearted song breaks on the summer stillness and floats away to add its portion to the great throbbing chord of the world's harmony.

The poet too has immortalized the humble cobbler at his bench. Bending over his last, attired in his striped apron, insignia of his toil, he has grown old and feeble sitting here at the door of his rude shop. He has mended the entire village in his day. He too lifts his head to watch the children on their way to school.

Fortified by his handiwork men go forth to the great cities there to take their part in the world's work. On the mild summer air the drone of his hammer comes pleasantly, faintly. The children know and love him. He too has his important role in the great scheme of human things.

Amid conditions where everything remains to be achieved true greatness is most often born. We read the poetry of Christina Rossetti, daughter of a family probably the most highly gifted we have known. The most talented was the father, Gabriel Pasquale Rossetti. Of his children, Andrea became a canonical orator and poet, Antonio a versifier at least, Domenico a journalist, medical writer and poet, with a knowledge of French, Latin, Hebrew and Canonical Law.

Born in the Abruzzi in the noble kingdom of Naples, Gabriel Rossetti was easily the genius of his day. A

master of pen and ink sketching, an improviser of Italian poetry, he was also a fine tenor singer. For a time under Murat he held the post of Secretary of Instruction and the Fine Arts. Fleeing from a political uprising, he found refuge in England, where he remained until his death. But to the end he was ever an Italian and a genius of the first class.

Of his four distinguished children, all were precocious. At five years of age, the little Gabriel second, was attempting dramas, tales and verses with a happy augury of great things. Before nine, Christina had entered on a literary career. At an age when most children are playing with their toys, she was dreaming of the heights of the soul. The other children, although not so illustrious, were all big talents.

Looking backward at the ancestry of this noted family, what shall we say of its origin or source? Did this genius, these talents find shelter in luxury and affluence which makes life comparatively easy and its burdens light to bear?

The father, Gabriel, was on both sides of very humble origin. His father, Nicola, was a blacksmith and locksmith. His maternal grandfather was a shoemaker. Everything, therefore, remained to be achieved by this brilliant youth who afterward bequeathed such a heritage of genius to his children.

In the midst of our busy age, there are probably few souls talented as was Christina Rossetti. Her genius did not take delight in beauty alone, nor did worldlyness ever contaminate her ardent soul. At all times, was said of her, the pain of the world lay against her heart.

Christina Rossetti's ear was ever close to nature. Nature's lessons lay very close to her pure heart. From the birth and growth and fall of blossoms, in the passing moods of a summer day she drew lessons which she later wove into harmonious song to ravish the human ear. Suffering was always her portion. The price which she had to pay for the achievement whereby the world has been so enriched, was bodily pain, constant pain which she bore cheerfully and lovingly.

Arthur Christopher Benson strikes the keynote of such an achievement when he says of her: "She is above all the singer of death. Whether as the eternal home-coming or the quiet relief after the intolerable restlessness of the world, or as the deep reality in which the fretful vanities of life are merged, it is always in view, as the majestic portal to which the weary road winds at last."—The Pilot.

THE REAL PRESENCE

The doctrine of the Holy Eucharist tells that the body and blood, soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, is present on our altars. Truly this is marvelous. It is so different from all other forms of religion, none of which claim God is dwelling in their churches. It should draw us to honor the Blessed Sacrament privately by frequent visits to the Church even when there is no service; it should certainly urge us to attend public devotion to this Sacrament, as at Benediction.

God has always desired to be near us. He walked familiarly with Adam in Paradise. After the fall, He spoke frequently with the Patriarchs. When he chose a people for His own, and led them forth from captivity, and by the hand of His servant organized them into a nation, He continually showed His protection and care. From the time they left Egypt, God had been with His people in a pillar of dark cloud. On the march it went before them, at night it became a column of fire. To them were given the Ten Commandments. The Israelites, stiff-necked as they were, saw how privileged they were above the surrounding nations. The Tabernacle was the centre of national unity in the desert and in the Promised Land.

This however, was but the figure and the prophesy of a truer divine presence. To us God came in person, at Christmas. When the Redemption of mankind was accomplished He would not leave us orphans. I will set My tabernacle in the midst of you, I will walk among you, I will be your God and you shall be My people." By saying "This is My Body, this is My Blood, do this for a commemoration of Me," He literally made possible this sublime fact. A God dwelling with His people. "Neither is there any nation so great that hath God so nigh to them, as the Lord our God is present to us."

This is a permanent wall of separation between the Catholic Church and the disintegrated Christianity of the late years many non-Catholic churches, copying us, have elaborated their buildings and enriched their worship, still they continue to be more meeting places and lack the warmth that is noticeable in entering Catholic churches. Our churches are really a home for God. He is dwelling in them as truly as we live in our homes. Wherever the Sacrament is reserved, in that community the most distinguished resident is our Eucharistic God.

It follows very naturally from this that if God is making His home among us, and invites us to call to visit Him frequently, we should be most anxious to avail ourselves of this grand opportunity. Our churches are open all day, and generally in the early evening, to

make it possible for the people to visit the Blessed Sacrament. No spouse, no spouse, ever sought a loved one as much as Jesus desires us to call and visit Him on the altar. What shall I tell Him? Why, tell Him that you are grateful for all He has done for you during your life. Tell God you love Him with your whole heart and soul, as He commands. Have you no favors to ask? No wants for soul or body? Surely there are many plans for which you seek advice? Certainly you have some troubles. Tell these to your best Friend. He will listen and tenderly assist.

Of all the public devotions in honor of the Adorable Sacrament that known as Benediction is the most frequent. In fact, almost all our evening services close with this beautiful ceremony. The word "Benediction" means blessing. There are blessings of priests, bishops, and of the Holy Father, No. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is a blessing of God. It is the service of the Church, with the most Holy Eucharist exposed on the altar as the central object of adoration, at the end of the Mass with the Blessed Sacrament, and God Almighty blesses the kneeling congregation.

The short moments of Benediction are great moments of grace. The very place is holy. We are in the presence of God; we kneel at His sacred feet. The angels of Heaven surround the altar, as the night they hovered about the crib. The sweet mellow tones of the organ, the sacred hymn "O Salutaris Hostia," "Tantum Ergo," all attune the heart, excite the mind to pious acts and holy as if transported into Heaven.

As children might come to a parent before going to bed, the Catholic after a day of toil comes to his Heavenly Father at Benediction, and receives a blessing. And when we leave the Church and mingle in the world we are stronger. And as the scent of incense lingers about the Church, so the grace of this devotion accompanies us long after we have left the house of God.

As a resolution, let us recall that in our churches, is ever present, our Lord and God, in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. If our faith is strong, we will not be satisfied with a respectful lifting of the hat as we pass a church, or a pious ejaculation, but if time permits, a short visit will be made. Try to make this a daily practice. Since Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is given every Sunday, and many other evenings, more of our people could attend, if they would "sit up" the faith that is within them. "Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament."

CAN THE CHURCH GRANT A DIVORCE?

Calm, sane, and authoritative, is the contribution of the Archbishop of New York to a recent newspaper symposium on divorce. "With us, divorce is not a controversial subject. We do not recognize it in any shape or form." Whatever his personal opinions, the student of this social evil must admit that here, at least, is an institution that knows its own mind. In the non-Catholic churches he finds official standards that are either low or uncertain, and, too often, officials who do not long withstand pressure to bring these standards even lower. The Catholic Church is the one official society, with an official policy known to all, and enforced upon all. Her teachings, as the Archbishop points out, leave no room for controversy. "Nothing that happens after marriage, whether it be insanity, imprisonment, unfaithfulness, or anything else, can be used as a plea for divorce. The contract is inviolable."

Clear and simple as this doctrine is, some critics, either totally unacquainted with it or deliberately malicious, have accused the Church of hypocrisy and dishonesty. They assert that while she publicly condemns divorce, she easily dissolves valid marriages and permits remarriage through her declarations of nullity. This statement is absolutely false; and every Catholic may safely challenge these critics to show ground for their statement, either in the law of the Church, or in the practice of her courts. Divorce is the severance of a valid marriage contract, which leaves one or both parties free to remarry. This understood, divorce is granted in every State of the Union, except South Carolina, and is admitted by all the Protestant Churches, except a few which forbid the remarriage of the adulterer. But such divorces are not, and cannot be, granted by the Catholic Church.

A "declaration of nullity," on the other hand, is an official declaration following a judicial investigation, that a valid matrimonial contract never existed. The distinction is obvious, and it is a distinction that constitutes an essential difference. Thus a civil court, for instance, cannot authorize the violation of a contract; but it may, if sufficient proof is alleged, declare that what in appearance is a valid contract is not valid, because the conditions necessary for validity were not present when the agreement was made. In this process, the State simply declares that the supposed contract was null and void from the beginning. There is assuredly no ground for the conclu-

sion that a court so ruling destroys or annuls a contract, for no contract exists or existed to be destroyed or annulled. As official custodian of the Sacraments, the Church possesses the same right of judging whether or not the conditions required for the matrimonial contract have been observed. She cannot dissolve a valid marriage, but she can officially declare, following the submission of proof, that a contract seemingly valid, was null and void from the beginning, because the conditions necessary to a valid contract were not present. This is not "divorce," which is the severance of a valid bond, with permission to remarry. It is a declaration, justified by fact, that the bond never existed.

Hence in the Catholic Church, an individual who has a lawful husband or wife, is forbidden to attempt another marriage, since he or she is not free to contract. Should this impediment, hidden at the time of the apparent marriage, be subsequently disclosed, and proved to the satisfaction of a matrimonial court, which it may be observed, is infinitely more searching in its scrutiny than any civil court, it would furnish ground for the issuance of a declaration of nullity. No sane man would identify this process with divorce. In general, no one who is incapable of understanding the nature of a contract, and the rights and duties subsequent upon the marriage contract; or who at the time of contracting is not free; or who when the contract is made is unable to perform the duties which flow essentially from the contract; or who, being a Catholic, has the Church and its teaching, any but a Catholic priest, can validly contract marriage, and the apparent marriage is null and void from the beginning.

Finally, it may be said that there are no secret or factitious impediments, nullifying the contract, but discoverable only when the fine Italian hand of some ecclesiastic has been lined with a suitable fee. That accusation can be made only by the ignorant or the malicious. The conditions which nullify the bond are stated clearly in the Canon Law, now accessible in many editions, and in such standard works of reference as the "Catholic Encyclopedia." As is stated in Canon 1118, "a valid marriage ratified, and consummated cannot be dissolved by any human power or by any cause except death." That is why the Catholic Church never grants a divorce.—America.

"LEARN OF ME"

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls." This says a devout writer, is a sublime epitome of the gospel. Our Lord seems to sum up all Christian perfections in these two virtues, meekness, and humility, as though we had nothing else whatever to learn of Him. He says nothing of faith hope and charity; nothing of temperance, prudence, justice and fortitude, evidently meaning that they were all comprised in some way in these two; either presupposed to them or following on them by natural consequence, or else actually included in their wide acceptance.

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart!" This is the portrait that our Lord has left of Himself. It is beautiful. Study it every day of your life, with a view to self-improvement and greater conformity to the likeness of your divine Model.

When we apply ourselves to the study of the Model, as we find it in the gospel story, we read how He went about doing good. He taught from place to place. He cured the sick and cast out devils. He preached to thousands of persons, and journeyed from place to place to heal the souls and bodies of men.

In the Blessed Sacrament is the continuation of all those mercies. The life of our dear Lord in the Divine Host is most active. He remains still in the tabernacle, it is true; but the thousands of persons come to visit Him, to be cured of the diseases of their souls. Graces are flying forth from His heart in inconceivable abundance. Sinners are struck with contrition. A poor, sad-hearted child comes in and kneels by the door. The Lord in the Sacrament sends forth His power. He casts forth the seven devils from her heart. She seeks the confessional, washes the feet of Jesus with her tears, and goes forth from before the tabernacle, another Mary Magdalene. A grief-stricken mother weeps for her son, who is dead in sin. The Lord in the Sacrament, being moved with compassion, says to her, "Weep not." He stretches forth His hand, and raises the youth from the death of sin and restores him to life. A mission is going on in a church, a thousand people and more are present; the preacher speaks from the pulpit, the Lord in the tabernacle sends forth His light and His grace; power has gone forth from Him, and the hearts of the people are touched, and hundreds are converted. It was Our Lord preaching from the tabernacle; the preacher in the pulpit was His instrument. Do you not see how like it is now to the time when He did all these same things in Galilee and Judea? From the tabernacle Our Lord works miracles, both on souls and bodies. He goes forth in the hands of His priesthood and visits the sick. He cures the lepers by cleansing from

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sin. He gives sight to the blind, by opening the eyes of unbelievers to the truths of faith. In Holy Communion He renews the miracle of feeding five thousand people with five loaves for He gives Himself wholly and entire to each one of thousands, nor does He multiply Himself, not does He become diminished.

He is with us in the Blessed Sacrament as a consequence of the Resurrection and Ascension, and His sacramental presence is a constant reminder of those happy mysteries.—The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

CARDINAL NEWMAN ON MARRIAGE

It is undeniably a solemn moment, under any circumstances, and requires a strong heart, when anyone deliberately surrenders himself, soul and body, to the keeping of another while life shall last; and this, or something like this, reserving the supreme claim, Cardinal Newman says: "In individual cases, it may be made without thought or distress; but, surveyed objectively, it is so tremendous an undertaking that nature seems to sink under its responsibilities. When the Christian binds himself by vow to a religious life, he makes a surrender to Him Who is all-perfect, and Whom he may unreservedly trust. Moreover, looking at that surrender on its human side, he has the distinct safeguard of regulations, and of the principles of theology, to secure him against tyranny on the part of his superiors. But what shall be his encouragement to make himself over, without condition or stipulation, as an absolute property, to a fallible being, and that, not for a season, but for life? The mind shrinks from such sacrifice, and demands that, as religion enjoins it, religion should sanction and bless it. It instinctively desires that either the bond should be dissoluble, or that the subjects of it should be sacramentally strengthened to maintain it. 'So help me, God,' the formula of every oath is emphatically necessary here."

"FURTHEST SOUTH"

Outside the Catholic Church, the sects are becoming more and more extraordinary in their conduct. While the historic Chapter House of Lincoln Cathedral has been used for a Masonic Lodge, by authority of the Bishop, we have on the other hand, the High Church Party organizing a Guild of Our Lady, and this Guild of Our Lady is actually about to arrange a pilgrimage to her ancient shrine of Walsingham in reparation for all the insults and neglect which the first cousins of these very folk have offered her! This is about the "furthest South" in the direction of Rome—that the Anglicans have yet gone. The unfortunate side of the movements is that they are founded on obstinate pride. "We are not wrong and we are going to be fish-flesh and good red herring all at the same time," is the spirit which inspires them. They would adopt Our Lady to give them a cachet. But you cannot enter Royal employment simply by saying, "I am a King's Messenger." Such a statement will ultimately bring you up against the onus of proving you are what you say and then it is not your opinion which will count, but fact and truth.—Catholic Herald.

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Carroll O'Donoghue

A Tale of the Irish Struggles of 1866 and of Recent Times
by CHRISTINE FABER

Poor suffering Ireland! trampled long Still at the feet of those of tale and song. The following story was written with the hope of contributing a little to that literature which seeks to delineate faithfully the Irish character—the faults of the latter have served too often as a fruitful theme, while its virtues were either ignored, or so caricatured that they failed to be appreciated, or even understood. While the genial and spontaneous humor of the Irish people remain almost without a parallel, that very humor sometimes seems to obscure or conceal the heart depths beneath it the spirit of sacrifice for loved ones, the intense devotion for the sacred, the heroic, and, in many cases, cheerful endurance of wrong; they were unable to recede.

Such are some of the kindly qualities of the Irish, though alas! at times marred by sad blots; but side by side with these faults are virtues rare and bright, and to depict these virtues, with the hope of winning just regard for a people so long suffering, was the aim of the author.

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