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CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN.
THE HOLY FATHER AND THE
ATHLETES.

We supplement the brief despatch recently published in these columns by the appended details from the Rome correspondent of the London Tablet as to the Pope and Italy's first national athletic gathering, which took place, as our readers know, in the early part of last month at the Vatican.

Writes the Tablet correspondent: "The Vatican has been in the hands of the athletic youths of Italy for the last three days. Several hundreds of picked youths from Catholic clubs and colleges all over Italy have been here for the first really great national athletic gathering ever assembled in this country."

"They have had bicycle races, running, walking, jumping, gymnastics of all kinds and their contests have been watched with great interest by some of the highest officials of the Vatican. Cardinal Merry del Val stole several hours from his grave cares of State to be present at the games, and Mgr. Bisleti was specially told off by the Holy Father to give an account of how things went. But the ceremonies of today might be called the apotheosis of muscular Christianity in Rome. The youths gathered this morning in the Church of Sant' Ignazio to assist at the Mass celebrated for them by Cardinal Cavigliani, and from there marched in serried ranks, preceded by a fine band, to the Vatican. By 10 o'clock they were all lined along the loggia on the floor awaiting the arrival of the Holy Father. When His Holiness made his appearance he was greeted with a lusty cheer. He gave his hand to kiss to each of the young men in turn, pausing here and there to ask details about some of the clubs or to say a few words of praise to one or other of the victors in the recent contests. The solemn reception took place in a few minutes, later on the Pope had elected to give it special importance, for he was attended by his Maestro di Camera, Majordomo, several Chamberlains, and pickets of Noble and Swiss Guards. The President of the Committee of the athletic gathering then read a brief address to the Holy Father, and begged His Holiness to say a few words to the young men."

"I am glad," said Pius X., "to find myself among you, for I consider myself as a companion and a friend with you. I bless your games and your athletic exercises—while they make your bodies healthy and strong, they are certain also to have a powerful and beneficial influence on your minds. Physical exercises, occupying your bodies and your minds, will keep you from idleness, which is the father of all the vices. Recalling the words of Jesus Christ, I exhort you to be strong in keeping and defending your faith, strong in combating temptations, strong in overcoming the obstacles that lie in your path. Do not be afraid that in asking you to be good and religious I would deprive you of your pastimes or require of you great sacrifices beyond your years; on the contrary, I wish you to have recreation of body and of mind, which is necessary for you so that in the autumn of your life you may be able to reap the fruit of a healthy springtime. The foundation of all your work must be love of God, for in piety you will find strength to fulfil your apostolate, and remember that your apostolate is first of all that of affording a good example, which is of far greater value than preaching. And the Holy Father quoted poets and philosophers to show the poor figure cut by him who preaches well but practises badly. The world is not quite so bad as pessimists paint it to day, but it is unhappily true that a great many have come to forget the golden maxim: 'Do unto others as you would be done by.' All this is due to the lack of the religious principle. I earnestly exhort you all, therefore, the Pope concluded, to do good Catholics in deed as well as in name. Don't be afraid of the ridicule that the irreligious may try to cast upon you for the religious spirit you show—they will, in the end, be forced to do homage to your virtue." All went on their knees as Pius X. solemnly called down on them and their organization the blessing of God, and three rousing cheers finished the function. Before leaving the Holy Father stopped a few moments to congratulate the youths of the club "Giovane Roma," whose candidates carried off the greater part of the athletic honors of the last few days. This afternoon it looked as if the rain were bent on spoiling the distribution of prizes in the Cortile di San Damaso, where a temporary throne and platform had been erected for the occasion. Fortunately the clouds broke just in time, and the Holy Father appeared again before the eager athletes, surrounded with the same pomp as in the morning, and this time accompanied by Cardinal Merry del Val and Mathieu and by the Archbishop of Westminster. A number of gymnastic exercises were gone through and then His Holiness conferred the four principal prizes on the winning clubs and great applause. Among the other prizes, which have been awarded this evening, were a beautiful oil painting offered by Cardinal Merry del Val, gold and silver medals presented by Cardinal Respighi, Vicar-General to His Holiness; a beautiful album, the gift of Cardinal Cavigliani, and a set of cut glass offered by Mgr. della Chiesa, the Vice-Secretary of State. The Liberal papers have devoted a great deal of space to the proceedings, and many of them have urged before the government the necessity of rivaling the Pope in his encouragement of athletics among the youth of Italy."

"I don't go for to say that I never did wish to be rich, for such thoughts come to most of us, but I soon learnt that it was wrong to be discontented with the sort of life it pleased the Almighty to put me in, and married. I engaged to your father, and when I got married I thought to myself that I didn't feel as if I envied the Queen, for a better man than he never lived."

"Lisbeth was silent, and her mother went on: "You just turn all that rubbish out of your head, 'Lisbeth, and be content at home, though we are poor, and have to work hard, as you'll have to do when you marry."

"You marries Jo? I think to myself that our Blessed Lady was content to live in that humble home at Nazareth, I've no call to complain. What was good enough for her is good enough for me," said Mrs. Baxton decidedly.

At this moment Bobby came to grief by falling down, and an uproar, in which Bill joined loudly, diverted Mrs. Baxton's attention, and 'Lisbeth went upstairs to her room and set to work unpacking an old dress, and then placing a pocket in the undershirt she had on.

As she sewed her thoughts were busy. She was far away in imagination from Hummersmith, and even the glories of Miss Ferrars' house were dimmed by the mental pictures, on which she dwelt, of magnificence and grandeur, and where she saw herself attired as Miss Ferrars had been when 'Lisbeth happened to be at the house, and she was going to a ball.

Tears occasionally came into 'Lisbeth's eyes as she worked, and she brushed them away quickly, giving a start of surprise when she heard her mother's voice calling her.

"Three times I've called to you, and you've never heard," said Mrs. Baxton, as 'Lisbeth appeared at the top of the stairs.

"What's it, mother?" "I've got to go out. I'll run round to Mrs. Swiggins about that baby of hers, and then I must just go to Mrs. Harris and see whatever she means by sending Jenny to the Board school when she promised Father Howson faithful to send her to our schools."

She shall have a bit of my mind, I promise you, and I must look in and see how poor Danvers is, and take him a bit of fruit. You just put the children to bed, and if you've nothing to do you can just look over Katie's frock, as she hasn't time to night to mend it where it all got ripped out. I think that's all."

"Jo's coming round to-night," said 'Lisbeth.

"He can come, and you can do your sewing while he's here," said Mrs. Baxton, "but I shan't be long, and if I'm back then you can go for a bit of a stroll together, these light evenings I've no objection."

"Very well, mother," said 'Lisbeth, and when Mrs. Baxton had slammed the door after her, 'Lisbeth put the children to bed, and by the time that was done Joseph Carr appeared on the scene.

He was an insignificant looking young man, with a good, trustworthy face that was a safe index to his character. He had a strong Cockney accent, was London born and bred, and was by trade a house painter.

"Bloomin' 'Lisbeth?" he asked, as he was met by the girl, for whom he had a strong, genuine affection.

'Lisbeth nodded, and in the half light Jo did not see the little moan of disgust which she made as she smelt the paint on him, though he had removed his working clothes.

"Well, we've had a job this last month, and no mistake," said Jo, seating himself where he could see 'Lisbeth bending over Katie's frock, which she seemed suddenly seized with a desire to finish. "Seems like a year since you and me met."

It is in the lulls of life that great things are lost and won. You struggle against the tides that beset you—but those tides never rest.—Arthur Stringer.

All our other devotions are as nothing compared to devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament is the great central fact of the Church on earth.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

STORIES ON THE ROSARY

By LOUISE EMILY DONNICK
The Presentation in the Temple.

COUNT LUGI.

"Nothing's up," "I say there is," said Mrs. Baxton. Come now."

"Well, mother," said 'Lisbeth, "it do seem so hard when one goes to a swell house like Miss Ferrars' and see all her beautiful things—you don't know how lovely they are, mother—why, her dressing table is set out like a jeweller's shop, even the brushes got silver backs, and her dresses and all, and them beautiful rooms, and then to come back here to this little poky house, and we so poor and having to wash and scrub and strive, and oh it's all hateful."

"Katie," said Mrs. Baxton to Kate, who sat open-mouthed at this unexpected outpouring of discontent, "you've finished your tea, be off and don't sit gaping there while your sister's making a fool of herself. Well, I never did hear such talk. 'Lisbeth, wherever have you picked it up?"

A sudden look came over 'Lisbeth's face, and she gave a sniff which irritated her mother.

"Don't sniff like that as if you'd a cold in your head, or I'll see that you have a dose of medicine to set you to rights," remarked Mrs. Baxton, who, in some respects, treated 'Lisbeth like a child of six.

"I haven't a cold. Indeed, mother, I do feel it's horrid to be a working girl and poor and not have nice things. It seems very unfair and dreadful, and you'd think so too if you was to go to ladies' houses as I do and see them."

"Lisbeth with a sound in her voice that was suspiciously like tears; and as she spoke she pushed aside her unfinished plate of bread and butter.

"Well, I never! Like your impudence to think as I've not been in ladies' houses," said Mrs. Baxton; "your memory's like a sieve, my girl, or you'd recollect that I've told you that before I married I was house-maid in first-class families which lived in houses a bit bigger than where your Miss Ferrars lives."

"Oh yes, I do remember mother—and didn't it make you want to be rich too?"

"I don't go for to say that I never did wish to be rich, for such thoughts come to most of us, but I soon learnt that it was wrong to be discontented with the sort of life it pleased the Almighty to put me in, and married. I engaged to your father, and when I got married I thought to myself that I didn't feel as if I envied the Queen, for a better man than he never lived."

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TALKS ON RELIGION.

SUPERSTITION.

Superstition is more prevalent than many suppose. It is not confined to the uneducated classes, since it has found lodgment and a welcome in the upper classes. Signs and omens often decide the actions of those and fortune-tellers and mediums too frequently find their best customers among the wealthy and the educated.

Superstition attributes to creatures or to things, powers which they do not and cannot possess of themselves. It leads persons to attach undue importance to forms and observances; and to ascribe occult influences to trivial things, as to omens, charms, dreams, etc. Superstition frequently attributes to creatures powers which belong to the Creator alone.

Christians addicted to superstition are not worthy of the name, because that practice virtually seeks to unite the worship of God with the worship of the devil. St. Paul says: "What fellowship hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? (2 Cor. vi. 14.)

Curiosity and an overweening anxiety to know the future or to find out things hidden are the mainsprings of superstition. Persons may not directly seek or wish to have dealings with the devil, but they virtually do since they mean, if possible, to get the knowledge from some power, from some hidden power outside of God. They are not using natural means of knowledge, and the good they look for they do not for one moment attribute to God. From what power can it come? It is obvious that it comes from an occult or diabolical power. Is not this kin to offering worship to some demon?

The cutting of cards, the reading of cups and the consultation of fortune-tellers may often originate in levity and thoughtlessness. Yet there is always something wrong about these practices, and frequently there may be serious sin. God alone knows the future; for the punishment of the superstitious He may sometimes permit the things predicted to come to pass. King Saul consulted the witch of Endor. By the permission of God the prophet Samuel appeared and said: "Why hast thou disturbed me?" The Lord will deliver Israel with thee unto the hands of the Philistines; and to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me; and the Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines." (1 Kings xxviii. 7.)

Saul had found out the future—a sad future for himself and for his sons. Spiritualists profess to have communication with the souls of the departed, and curiosity about the future leads many people to consult them. Much of the alleged knowledge of the future is trickery. But apparently it is not always so. Should it be true, it is diabolical and unlawful. When Ochozias, the King, in his sickness had sent messengers to consult Beelzebub to learn if he would recover, an angel of the Lord spoke to Elias the prophet, saying: "Arise and go up to meet the messengers of the King of Samaria, and say to them: Is there not a God in Israel that ye go to consult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron? Wherefore thus saith the Lord: From the bed on which thou art gone up thou shalt not come down, but thou shalt surely die." (4 Kings i. 2.)

Superstition embraces omens and dreams. Pagans of the olden time sought a knowledge of the future through these mediums. They directed their actions by the flight of birds and by seeking to read the appearances found in the bodies of beasts that had been killed. Nothing could be done until the omens were declared favorable. There is a kinship between these practices and the signs that many people designate as "lucky" or "unlucky." These signs are applied to animals and even to persons.

Another way by which the superstitious seek to draw the curtain from the future is by "charms" and "spells." A person lays a great deal of stress upon the spirit of a certain tree carried about his neck, or he will carry a rusty nail about his waist or conceal or expose a horse shoe for "good luck."

Once, while riding on a local freight train to a mission, we noticed a horse shoe nailed over the door of the caboose. We asked the conductor for an explanation. He said: "One of the brakemen placed it there for good luck."

We asked: "What have been the results?" He replied: "I have been conductor for fifteen years. I never had an accident. Three months ago that horse shoe was nailed there and since that train has jumped the track three times. I'm going to yank that horse shoe from the door."

"Spells" are somewhat different from "omens." "Spells" consist of a certain or peculiar form of words, or the saying of prayers in a peculiar manner attributing to the change a magical or supernatural effect.

You may say: "What is the harm of all this? We do not do these things seriously, but in a spirit of fun." One of the saints said: "Those who joke with the devil cannot rejoice with Christ." Such foolish and sinful practices should find no place in the life or conduct of a Christian. You may retort: "We have seen these practices at church fairs and lawn fetes." That may be. They should be eliminated there as elsewhere. There is no justification for them in any place, and less under the auspices of the Church than under other auspices.

The question may be asked: "Are not crosses, scapulars, medals and relics worn by Catholics worn as charms, and do not certain powers attributed to them?" The difference should be obvious. The protection, the blessing and assistance the pious Christian expects from these religious symbols he expects directly from God. They have been blessed in His Name. We do not attribute to the material things any power or influence. If a person were to persist in a life of sin, depending upon the medals, etc., to save him from the consequences of his bad life, he would be guilty of superstition.—Cleveland Universe.

PRAY FOR DEPARTED SOULS.

LET US PRAY FOR SINNERS EVEN AFTER THEIR UNHAPPY DEATH.

The Church condemns none to eternal torments. She publishes decrees to declare that one man is in heaven; she has never published any to declare that another is in hell.

Marshal Exelmans, who was precipitated into the grave by a fall from his horse, had neglected the practice of religion. He had promised to have recourse to confession, but had not time to do so. Nevertheless, the very day of his death, a person habituated to heavenly communications seemed to hear an inward voice saying: "Who can tell the extent of My mercy? Can any one fathom the depths of the sea, and calculate the amount of its waters? Much will be forgiven to certain souls that have remained in ignorance of death." How explain these strokes of grace? By the value of a soul purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, and by the mercy which knows no limits by some good work, unaltered, or prayer of the sinner during life; by the invisible ministry of the guardian angel, ever prompt to act, and ever ready to save his charge; by the preceding prayers of the just on earth and the saints in Heaven; but more than all, by the intercession of the Virgin Mary; in fine, by the prayers offered up for sinners after their death, even though they may have given no sign of repentance.

You read with pleasure those lines of the holy religious written to comfort a queen whose son was killed by a fall from a carriage: "Christians beneath a law of hope, no less than one of faith and love, we must unceasingly raise our thoughts from the abyss of our afflictions to the height of the infinite goodness of our Saviour. As long as a single breath of life remains, no barrier is placed between the soul and grace. We must, therefore, always hope, and make humble and preserving interest in the Lord. We cannot know to what degree it will be acceptable. Great saints and great doctors have gone very far in speaking of this powerful efficacy of prayer for beloved souls, whatever may have been their end. We shall some day understand these ineffable wonders of the divine mercy, which we must never cease to invoke with the utmost confidence."

The most eloquent of the archbishops of Constantinople, while arguing to prove that we must not mourn our dead with excess, but rather aid them with our prayers and works, imagines that one of his audience interrupts him, exclaiming: "But I mourn this dear deceased because he died a sinner." What is the error of St. John Chrysostom? "Is not this a vain pretext—for if such be the cause of your tears, why did you not make more effort to convert him while he lived? And if he really died a sinner, ought you not to rejoice that he can now no more increase the number of his sins? You must, in the first place, go to his help as far as you are able, not with tears, but with supplications, alms and sacrifices. All these things are indeed not idle inventions. It is not without necessity that in the Divine mysteries we commemorate the dead; it is not fruitlessly that we approach the altar with prayers to the Lamb Who taketh away the sins of the world, but by these means is consolation showered upon their souls. If Job could purify his children by offering sacrifices for them, how much more must He Whom we offer up for our dead give them relief."

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