

"They Can't Keep It Up"



THESE few pages are for Catholic mothers. Fathers are welcome to read them, but we address ourselves mainly to their better halves. Let us entertain ourselves with a parable.

On a cold, wet morning a shivering little beggar knocks timidly at your kitchen door asking for food. He is so miserable and tear-stained and dirty that your heart is touched ; and so, instead of making him eat the bitter bread of poverty while crouching on the steps, you bring him into your warm and cosy kitchen. You set your best before him and season the food with a kindness which goes right home to that little chap's heart, the gentle, unobtrusive kindness of which, thank God, every good woman's heart is full.

Just as the boy is about to fall to, a prudent thought arrests your charitable offices. This boy, you reflect, is poor and neglected and probably a wanderer. If I give him breakfast this morning he will very likely get the idea that he ought to have a breakfast every day, here or elsewhere. I am thus arousing an expectation, that is, of daily breakfast, which probably cannot be realized ; obviously daily breakfast for such poor little waifs is a practical impossibility. Can I assume the responsibility of stirring up such an expectation ? No. Therefore, I will give him no breakfast this morning. And so, your charity dissolved in the acid of logic, you come between the boy and his food and bid him be off.

Madam, by affixing a name, can this gloomy little parable be told of you ?

I am edified and reassured by your protestations. No, your motherly heart never refused a breakfast to a poor little waif on the plea that he was not sure of getting another on the following morning. That would be a good reason for giving it to him now. But I wonder if there are not a few waifs in your own home whom you do not allow to receive the Body of Christ, the Food of their souls, because, you say, "frequent or daily