

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

THE CHOICE OF A PROFESSION

The choice of a profession is of supreme importance, as it means our entrance into effective citizenship, says Mr. George Russell, in his "Milestones." This choice is one of the decisive events of life. It comes much later to rich boys than to poor ones, the latter having in many cases little or no choice. Poor boys have to face it as soon as they leave school or before, and the importance of the choice lies in the fact that in the profession adopted, each man who chooses it claims to have made it his own—professes to understand it and to be qualified to work in it. It is right that all men should be free to choose their profession, and no man should prescribe under what influences another shall spend his years of productive activity in the world. Mr. W. E. Gladstone once addressed an audience of Scottish students on the matter, saying: "Be assured that every one of you has his place and his vocation on this earth and that it rests with himself to find it. The business of modern education and legislation for educating the masses has in all countries been in the main to set free the individual man that he may reach out his vocation without wanton hindrance."

That word "vocation" is important, says Mr. Russell. In its religious sense it has come to mean simply occupation. It is thus used by Shakespeare who urges each of us to "labor in thy vocation." For Christians, however, it means the call of God, and with us it has come to mean occupation, because our work should be that particular business to which God has called us. Sooner or later according to temporal circumstances, this call of God comes to all. It comes as a question and as a command. Perhaps, says Russell (who is one of the first living authorities on educational matters) three simple counsels may help to a proper decision. If there is one particular occupation or pursuit for which a man has (1) Inclination (2) Fitness (3) Opportunity, then that seems to be the occupation or pursuit to which God calls him, and these three factors serve to distinguish it from mere whims or fancies of our own. Says Mr. Russell:

(1) Inclination.—To parents, teachers and friends, I would say, "Be very careful not to force a young life into ungenial lines. If a boy has a passionate love for an outdoor life, don't force him into a store or office. If he has a marked love of books or longs to be a doctor, or a soldier, or a sailor, or a musician, encourage him to follow the bent of his inclination."

(2) Fitness.—Special aptitudes for special occupations are often developed very young. Be on the look-out for them. Inclination without aptitude may be an uncertain guide.

(3) Opportunity.—When a significantly favorable opportunity (especially if not sought) for entering some particular calling comes in the way of a youth looking out for his life's work, and the Opportunity is coupled with Inclination and Fitness, we may reasonably conclude that it is sent by God; and the occupation for which he has a natural liking, requisite gifts and a favorable opportunity seems to be that to which God has called him.

Here is further what Russell calls a negative indication of a Vocation. If, he says, a particular occupation does not give fair play to our moral nature, we may be sure that God does not intend it for us. He will not call us to a career which involves dishonest, or dishonest, or immoral conditions. This is perhaps a specially-needed caution at a time when Commercial Morality is at a very low ebb. Contrast-wise, as long as an occupation gives fair play to our moral nature, we shall not count it common, or unclean or beneath our dignity because it may be in a worldly point of view, humble or undistinguished, or because it requires us like our Lord in the carpenter's shop, or St. Paul at his tent making to work with our hands.

So far, says Russell, he has only spoken of the choice of a profession. He has also a word to say on the hardly less important point of changing one's profession. How often one hears the sad complaint that if one only had one's time over again, matters would have been different. Putting aside very exceptional cases, he would say to those who are dissatisfied "Don't change, but make the best of it." But at the same time, a Christian may perceive opportunities for doing better in the world, not so much for himself, but for others, and we must all be careful not to let business become an idol. Each man must be on his

guard against ambition that overleaps itself and is purely personal and selfish; we must all be thankful for successes but be also prepared (and sometimes thankful) for failures, and though all his schemes miscarry and all his ambitions miscarry, and even though one's whole professional life seems to be, as men judge, a failure, yet a man must look forward and fortify himself by such looking forward to the full development and satisfying exercise of his powers in a world more real than this. Russell quotes Father Faber's words apropos of this:

God judges by a light which baffles mortal sight, And the useless-seeming man the crown hath won; In His vast world above A world of broader love God hath some grand employment for His son.

School, he concludes, is the first Milestone. Up to that, we have been led. Thence forward we must walk alone. And Confirmation is the second Milestone. From it we set out as fully equipped Christians ready for the fight.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

"SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME"

"Why aren't you doing your sums, Hans?"

The one addressed was a frail-looking boy of about nine years, who turned his head quickly at his mother's question, and looked at her with an expression of perplexity and alarm. "The figures have all suddenly disappeared, mother. I can't see them any more."

"You young shirker!" exclaimed his two brothers, who were busily at work at their own tasks; "get him a pair of spectacles, mother!"

The mother had already risen and laid aside her fine lace work; she understood her children too well to suspect Hans of deceit or pretence. Only a year before she had lost her husband, a captain in the army, who had died of paralysis, and now a great fear gripped at her heart. "My God!" she cried to herself, "what fresh trouble does this fore-shadow?" Her husband's long illness had swallowed up her small means, and her widow's pension and the money allowed for her children's education were not enough to provide for their general upbringing, and she was obliged to add to her income by her skillful needlework. And she did so with a courageous and uncomplaining heart, for she was still young, and had a genuine unselfish love for her children.

She went up to Hans. "Let me look, child," she said; "perhaps something has got into one of your eyes."

But the boy's eyes were bright and open, with no shadow upon them but that look of fear. "And my head aches so, too, mother."

So the mother carried her boy to bed, and sent for the doctor who had known her husband and had been a friend of the family for many years. He came and made a thorough examination of the child, and his face was very grave when it was over. "It is impossible, as yet," he said, "to speak positively as to the nature of the malady, but it is certainly not a case to be lightly treated. The brain appears to be affected, and the child must for the present remain in bed, and above all must be kept from all mental exertion."

When the doctor had closed behind the door Hans turned his face to the wall. His mother knew that he was crying and that he did not wish her to see his tears. And the very thought of his tears nearly broke her heart, for her Hans, mild, headstrong, and gay, so seldom gave way to them. What a soldier, happy little lad he had been! What a sunshine he had made for her during the long dark days of her sorrow!

Conquering her emotion, she tried to speak cheerfully to the child, but she could with difficulty control her voice. "My little Hans must lie quietly in bed for a day or two, and then, God willing, all will be well again." But Hans lay all that day in listless indifference to everything that was going on around him, hardly rousing himself to swallow his food; but toward evening he became restless.

"Mother, do you think I shall be able to go to school again next week?"

"I hope so with all my heart, dear child, but why do you ask?"

"Next week they begin the preparation classes for the First Communion, and I was wondering if I should be able to join them."

With some difficulty he drew himself nearer to his mother so that he might lay his head on her shoulder. "I do so want to be prepared, mother! Jesus Himself enters into our hearts at Holy Communion, and I have one very particular prayer I want Him to answer, and He can not refuse me then."

His mother drew him closer to her heart, too moved to speak. "What I want Him to do is to take away all your care and anxiety, dear mother, so that you may not have to sit up so late at night as you do now. And I shall pray, too, that I may be able to learn more quickly, and be able later on to work for you."

The mother could only bow her head. She hoped against hope with her child.

There could be no thought, however, of Hans taking part in the preparation classes. The insidious disease crept slowly on, and a nerve specialist was summoned for consultation. It did not take him long to perceive that the whole of the little body must soon be rendered helpless, and when the poor mother heard his verdict she felt as if all the world around her had gone to wreck.

He, her Hans, wild, frolicsome, little Hans, was never to rise again from his bed of pain, never again to see the sun shining on the flowers, or hear the wind, or the birds singing in the wood, or the brook rippling through the meadow grass! Never again could the sea him run out to join his school friends in their games, he who had been always first at their sports and had delighted in running and jumping! And as she thought on these things her heart was sick with anguish.

But she had no time to spend in grief; now more than ever was it necessary to earn money, for her Hans must not lack for anything that might lessen his suffering. Alas! Neither a fond mother's care nor the best skill of the physician could stay the relentless ebbing of the young life.

Christmas was over, and the New Year was two days old. Hans had not spoken again of the preparation for Communion, and his mother had earnestly besought those who came to see him not to touch upon the subject. Outside all nature was reviving under the keen fresh breath of spring; small white clouds were driven before the east wind, and the sun began to look out with laughing eyes from behind his winter veil. Then the blackbird came and sang his first song near the window of the sick child's room, and Hans heard it, though his senses were fast falling. "Mother," he said, and he spoke with effort, but with an unmistakable tone of happiness in his voice. "It will soon be spring now, and then Laetare, when we shall go to the First Communion."

Laetare! Laetare! How sad the words were for the mother. She looked at the child, who had already fallen asleep again. His long dark lashes lay like the silk fringes of a pall on his wasted cheeks, which fever painted each evening with the sad beautiful roses of death. He was lying with an expression of unearthly joy on his face—perhaps some beautiful dream had come to him, or perhaps his mother thanked God for it. It was already growing dark before the sufferer awoke. He felt for his mother's hand. "Where are you, mother? I cannot see you."

She quickly lighted the lamp; he could no longer distinguish between light and darkness, but he became aware of her presence and was pacified. "Never mind the lamp, mother, I only want to know you are there. I have had such a lovely dream. I thought I was far away in a meadow full of flowers beside the Sea of Genesareth; many other children were there with their mothers, playing with flowers and bright colored pebbles, along the shore, and over the blue waters. Suddenly it seems as though the sun had fallen from heaven and was coming toward us over the sea, and there was a light in the air and on the water which I can not describe. But the light was not from the sun, it was from Jesus, Who was coming toward us across the water, and His face shone like the sun and His eyes were like two stars, but I was not afraid, for he looked so kindly at me, just as kindly and sweetly as you do when you tuck me up at night. When he reached the shore He sat down on a large stone and beckoned to me; so I ran quickly to Him, and oh! mother, my limbs felt just as light and free as they did before I was ill. Then, He drew me to His side and kissed me on the forehead, and I felt so glad—I cannot say how glad—and I gathered up courage and said, 'Dear Jesus, let me go First to Communion on Laetare. I have so much I want to ask you to do for mother, and He put His arm round me and said in a loud voice, so that all the children and mothers could hear, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me.' Then the other children came up to Him and I awoke, but I still feel so happy mother, as if I was soon going to fly up to heaven."

The following day one of the teachers from the school called on his mother who told her that the Bishop of the diocese had been staying in the town and had heard about her sick boy, and intended coming the next Sunday and himself administering the Sacrament to Hans. A shiver of fear passed over the mother; across the dead ages, and from some immeasurable distance, she seemed to hear a voice uttering words that live on for ever: "Suffer little children to come unto Me!" And

amid her tears she told the priest the dream her child had had as he lay sick unto death.

The dying boy received the Blessed Sacrament with the devout fervor of an angel; it was to be his last, his spiritual food for the journey into eternity.

"Mother," he whispered that evening with falling voice, "you need not trouble any more; Jesus will answer my prayers for you and my brothers, and His Himself has hidden me come."

The next morning he died. On the face of the dead boy lay the reflection of an unexpressed and endless bliss.—Catholic Opinion.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH YIELDS RELUCTANTLY, BUT EXPECTS CATHOLIC PARTNER TO REMAIN LOYAL

It sometimes becomes necessary in an organization to remind the members of the duty of loyalty. For it happens that many allow themselves to act as if they retained not membership or as if they had lost devotion and affection. Secular organizations are obliged to call attention to such a decline in interest or loyalty and to demand more show of attachment than may have been given on the part of some members. At times some Catholics act as if they were no longer Catholics and neglect the practice of the faith that may be in them. One thing or other draws them off and they are not seen at Mass or at the Sacraments. Eventually they drift away so far that not until they are no longer doing they feel the need of priestly ministrations.

We have particularly in mind many who have entered into mixed marriages and allow the prejudices of the non-Catholic partner to influence them to such an extent that for the time they hold not to the practices which should distinguish them. Not seldom do we bewail the temporary defection at least of one from whom greater loyalty was expected. When a priest with a dispensation assists at the marriage of a Catholic with a Protestant, the condition is understood that the Catholic be free and determined to be faithful to the requirements of the Catholic religion; and the promise is exacted from the Protestant of non-interference with this right of the Catholic. Yet the Catholic unfortunately sometimes is affected by the positive prohibition of the Protestant. Now we want to say that the Catholic man or woman, especially the latter, has at least as much right to attend to the demands of the Church as the Protestant to his; and he exercises a tyrannical power when he tries to prevent her. And the Catholic manifests a weakness which is unpardonable, when he or she yields, and becomes afraid to obey the laws of the Church. We strongly say to such Catholics whose Protestant consort seeks to detain them from loyalty to

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their training, that they should be independent and stand up for their rights, and demand religious freedom. We have found many Protestants married to Catholics, while demanding liberty of conscience for themselves, refuse to allow the same to their Catholic consorts.

Politics and religion are prolific sources of trouble and disagreement. For this reason we are sorry to be obliged to marry our Catholic men and women to Protestants; chiefly because we know the frequent cause of contentions and unhappiness resulting. We would rather that Protestant marry Protestant, and Catholic marry Catholic. We are not narrow-minded, nor illiberal. We respect and honor Protestants. But we know how difficult it is for them to understand the Catholic viewpoint, and hesitate when they want to marry members of our Church. When we do consent, it is with the distinct provision that they stand not in the way of the Catholic's duty and practices of religion. We trust to their sense of honor and to their fairness. Our trouble is not so much with them, except it be to condemn their attitude of refusal or ill will when it is a question of the freedom for the Catholic in the practice of the Catholic religion. Our contention is rather with the Catholic, for not standing on the right of liberty of conscience, and for not demanding non-interference in this particular. Again we say that in all mixed marriages Catholics must be loyal to Church and religious duties and allow nothing to draw them away from either, and must see to it that they be allowed the same liberty of conscience as the Protestant claims and exercises for himself. It is becoming imperative to insist in all mixed marriages that the issue be clearly understood at the beginning and for the Catholic in such marriage to show that he or she will determinedly use the individual right of freedom and liberty of conscience in the practice of the Catholic religion. —Baltimore Catholic Review.

HOW A PRIEST RESCUES ST. LOUIS DERELICTS

"Sure I know where it is," said a shoe string peddler on one of the main streets of St. Louis, Mo. "I stop here—1121 North Seventh street. He's a great big guy, an' all you gotta do is sit him, and he will trust you for a bed, and you don't have to sing a hymn to get it."

The little man who asked the location of Father Dempsey's hotel was pale and emaciated. His shoes were in tatters and he wore a miserable overcoat, so large for him that it dragged the ground like a woman's train. He shivered off in the direction indicated by the peddler, and when he was received at the hotel and asked for Father Dempsey he was almost exhausted with fatigue. He had "beat" his way, and arrived in St. Louis that morning.

"I haven't any money," said the man. "I was told to see Father Dempsey."

"Just register," said the clerk. "Go into the parlor and wait if you wish to see Father Dempsey personally."

The man registered and went into the parlor. It is a long room, with plenty of light and ventilation. There are no tiled or rug covered floors in that parlor, but it contains a great number of comfortable chairs and tables for writing. An immense stack of books was in one corner, while newspapers were provided on racks for the guests. There were probably half a hundred men waiting for Father Dempsey, and every race and religious cult was represented, but most of them had no religion, Jews, blue-eyed Swedes, dark skinned Greeks, a penniless, though sprung Russian, an excited Frenchman, a Belgian immigrant and soon after, Father Dempsey, who is an Irishman, entered to complete the circle.

When the little man's turn came he asked Father Dempsey if he could have a bed for the night.

"My poor little fellow! Indeed you can have a bed, and some supper, and a bath, too."

"But I have no money and no job; and I don't know how I can pay you, Father Dempsey."

"Your credit is good. Stay with me till you get a job, and you can pay me then."

And thus Father Dempsey acquiesces his "guests"—men who have tasted the drag, the kind who handle the dog, the streets for a nickel. He trusts them, and strange to say, they very seldom "beat" him. Some are crooks, but a great many of them are laboring men down on their luck. He never forgets their faces, and never questions their past. Former bank clerks, mining engineers, and even a member of the British parliament have been his guests.

The hotel was established in 1906 to give a clean, cheap lodging house to those who need such an institution. In the last annual report it was shown that 23,654 men had slept in the hotel since its opening; 74,975 meals had been served. In addition 38,000 free meals have been served. Work has been found for 5,607 men. The hotel is not a religious institution, and there are no rules to observe. The guests have as much liberty as do the guests of the Ritz. It is supported chiefly by donations. The difference between the few cents charged for a bed and meal and their cost means a big deficit. The fame of the hotel has spread to many lands; a money order for \$15 was received from Dr. Ludwig Brammer of Dresden, Germany

with the explanation that it was what was left of a Boer relief fund, and that he did not know of any more worthy recipient than Father Dempsey's hotel.—The Tablet.

THE LAITY SHOULD HELP INSTRUCT CONVERTS

Of the place of the laity in making converts much has lately been written; and not too much. For as the human frame must gradually perish if the surface of the body be filled by the little actives, so must the Church's propaganda be gradually enfeebled and finally become extinct if the laity, who are the only distributors of the truth of God in men's homes and hearts, are not healthfully at work helping non-Catholics into the Church. But it is not of the activities of zealous lay people for making converts we intend here to speak. Rather we would call attention to what they can do when conversion has been effected and the task of instruction for actual reception only remains.

To illustrate our theme. Early this summer we came across the pastor of a good sized city parish in the middle West. Naturally (especially as he was an old and much esteemed friend) we asked him about conversions. He answered: "During the year now elapsed we have instructed and received into the Church just seventy converts, all adults, mostly young people, a majority of them men, none of them 'petty converts,' that is to say entering Catholicism on occasion of marrying a Catholic."

"The same our other question: 'How did you manage to instruct so many?'" The answer: "Only by prodigious labor; for barring a few cases, I and my assistant must prepare all of them one by one. Their hours of work crowd them all for instruction into the evenings, better say the nights of the week, and not a few can only come Sunday nights. They greedily devoured our best time—that commonly assigned for reading up for our sermons, for hunting up obstinate sinners, for a taste of the open air, for finishing the daily recitation of the breviary—all devoured by the teaching of the catechism to our converts." He would quickly add that he did not grudge his time and toil to so noble a cause, but just the very reverse. It was to him—we know it well—a glorious momentary of incessant repetition in redundancy phrase of the reason why of human existence and divine clemency, a heavenly drudgery comparable only with the ceaseless but exquisitely joyful care of a mother for her helpless babes. But as mothers are heroes of watching and loving and toiling with their children, so are parish priests heroes in instructing converts when their number is considerable. Bright ones (and they are nowadays by no means scarce) test his brain and tax his memory of his books with crucial problems; dull ones agonize him with their ill but ingenious stupidity, faith being in their case a lamp shining in a dark place; others are men and women wholly exhausted by their day's labor—noting but their eagerness and gratitude sustaining them from falling asleep, compelling him to drive in every word with painful emphasis and constant repetition. How painful the pleasure, how sad the privilege of instructing converts every night of the year but confession nights! We knew it of old; but that conversation with our friend brought it back vividly.

But now we touch the layman's share in this final process of conversion—final, and most important and most holy of all. And let the reader mark well that not a single one of our dear old friend's three score and ten converts of that previous twelve months but had been converted mainly by Catholic lay people. And not a single atom of the labor of the final preparation had been done by a man or woman of the laity. A lay friend has guided each of them across a wasteful ocean of miserable doubt, in sighing of the future eternity, stormy disputes with closest relatives, sometimes even despair. And now when the harbor of eternal truth and love at last is sighted—the pilot vanishes totally away and his place taken by the priest.

This should not be so. It is a grotesque commentary on our Lord's words: "It is one who soweth and another who reapeth" (John iv, 88) And yet multitudes of the laity are perfectly competent. Without the laity no Sunday School is possible; yet what is taught to a convert for his reception is hardly a tithe of what is usually taught a little child in Sunday School to prepare it for First Communion.

We do not advise that all converts should be prepared by men and women of the laity, for the pastor should reserve to his own care those who need more than a layman easily can give them either because they are troubled by difficulties of more than usual seriousness, or because their dispositions are not beyond question. But by far the greater number may be confided to zealous and well informed members of the laity, such as are to be had for the asking, and easily may be organized systematically for this work. The case of our pastor is not at all exceptional—thank God! Many priests have more converts than they can rightly manage. The harvest is getting beyond us. Systematic aid on the part of the laity is positively needed if we are to cope with this superabundance of souls seeking admittance into the Church.—The Missionary.

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