

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

If you have a gray-haired mother In the old home far away, Sit down and write the letter You put off day by day, Don't wait until her first steps Reach heaven's pearly gates, But show her that you think of her Before it is too late.

If you've a tender message Or a loving word to say, Don't wait till you forget it, But whisper it today, Who knows what bitter memories May haunt you if you wait? So make your loved ones happy Before it is too late.

THE MAN WHO IS DOWN AND HOW HE CAN GET UP

While exploring in the library of the Monks of the Abbotcy at Graymoor, N. Y., a few days ago a visitor picked up a little volume entitled: "The Man Who is Down." He was impressed by the title and started to read the booklet. He did not leave it out of his hands until he had finished it. Then he passed it on to others. It set him thinking too, did that little book, and, first thing he realized, he found himself on his knees before one of the Fathers on the mountain making a long neglected Confession! What is more—he took the pledge against the use of alcoholic liquor for the rest of his life! Here are a few extracts from the little work:

"Tonight I want to talk to the man who is down, to the man who has his back to the wall, and who is being embattled by his own temptations. Temptation is a universal experience—the one thing that makes every man the other man's brother, and creates within him, when he thinks about it, a grave sense of tenderness as he realizes that every man he meets has the same black spot in his nature and the same terrible fight going on from day to day.

"But temptation is more than a universal experience. It is an individual thing. Just as you have your own handwriting, your own face, or your own walk, your own temptation—different in every case, but generally, some one temptation which means everything to you, which sums up the whole battle of your life, and which, if you conquer, you would conquer the world. That temptation follows you wherever you go, like your shadow. I have gone into the heart of Africa. When I opened the curtains of my tent in the morning the first face I saw was the hideous face of my own temptation. Go where you like, you cannot avoid it. It will follow you wherever you go and lie with you in the grave. Temptation is not only a universal experience, but you have doubtless noticed that it is also very lonely. It cuts a man off in a moment from his fellow-men, and in the silence of his heart he finds himself fighting out that battle on which the issues of his own life hang. Christ trod the wine press alone, and so do you and I. That is one of the things that make it harder, because there is no one to blame us when we go wrong, and there is no one to applaud us when we do right.

"More than that, temptation is also a pitiless thing. It goes into the Church and picks off the man in the pulpit. It goes into the university and picks off the student in the class. It goes into the Senate and picks off the great man. Let him think that he stands, however high up, however sheltered, take heed lest he fall! "There are two classes of sins—sins of the body and sins of the disposition. The Prodigal Son is a typical instance of sins of the body, and the elder brother is a typical instance of sins of the disposition. The elder was just as bad as the Prodigal, probably worse. The one set of temptations comes from the animal; the other from the savage? We are built in three stories—the bottom the animal; a little higher up the savage; and on the top, the man. That is the old Pauline trichotomy—body, soul, spirit. Paul spoke of this body of death. Science speaks of it in almost precisely the same language. Whatever the origin, that is the construction of a man, he is built in those three layers. With this analysis it is, perhaps, easier to see how temptation may be met.

"Many a man goes through life hanging his head with shame and living without his self-respect because he has never discovered the distinction between temptation and sin. It is only when a man sees temptation coming and goes out to meet it, welcomes it, plays with it, and invites it to be his guest that it passes from temptation into sin. But until he has opened the door of his own accord and let it in, he has done no wrong. He has been a tempted man—not a sinner. The proof, of course, that temptation is no sin is that Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

"Many a man is thrown back in his attempts to live a new life by his clinging to him of this residuum of his past. He does not discover until perhaps too late that there is nothing wrong in these things until they have passed a certain point. If he sees them coming and turns his back on them he has not sinned. Indeed, temptation is, not only not a sin, but is the most valuable ingredient in human nature. Who was it that said 'the greatest of all temptations is to be without any?' The man who has no temptation has no chance of becoming a man at all. The only way to get character is to have temptation. If a man never exercises his muscles he will get no muscle. If a man never exercises his moral nature in opposing temptation he will get no muscle in his character. Temptation is an opportunity to virtue. What makes a good picture? Practice. What makes a good oarsman? Practice. What makes a good ball-player? Practice. Temptation is the practice of the soul. The man who has most temptation has most practice.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

SHORT SKETCH OF LIVES OF SAINTS OF THE WEEK

JULY 8.—ST. ELIZABETH OF PORTUGAL Elizabeth was born in 1271. She was daughter of Pedro III of Arragon, being named after her aunt, St. Elizabeth of Hungary. At twelve years she was given in marriage to Dennis, King of Portugal, and from a holy child became a saintly wife. She heard Mass and recited the Divine Office daily, but her devotions were arranged with such prudence that they interfered with no duty of her state. She prepared for her frequent communications by severe austerities, fasting three weeks, and by heroic works of charity. She was at times called on to make peace between her husband and son Alfonso, who had taken up arms against him. Her husband tried her much, both by his unfounded jealousy and by his infidelity to herself. A slanderer affecting Elizabeth and one of her pages made the king determine to slay the youth, and he told a lime-burner to cast into his kiln the first page who should arrive with a royal message. On the day fixed the page was sent; but the boy, who was in the habit of hearing Mass daily, stopped on his way to do so. The king, in suspense, sent a second page, the very originator of the calumny, who, coming first to the kiln, was once cast into the furnace and burned. Shortly after, the first page arrived from the church, and took back to the king the lime-burner's reply that his orders had been fulfilled. Thus hearing Mass saved the page's life and proved the queen's innocence. Her patience, and the wonderful sweetness with which she even cherished the children of her rivals, completely won the king from his evil ways, and he became a devoted husband and a truly Christian king. She built many charitable institutions and religious houses, among others a convent of Poor Clares. After her husband's death, she wished to enter their Order; but being dissuaded by her people, who could not do without her, she took the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, and spent the rest of her life in redoubled austerities and almsgiving. She died at the age of sixty-five, while in the act of making peace between her children.

"I fancy we all imagine we have more temptations than anybody else. This is a universal delusion. But, instead of praying to be delivered from our temptations, we ought to try to understand their essential place in the moral world. Taken away from us, they would leave us without a chance of becoming strong men. We should be insipid characters, flaccid and useless. That is why the New Testament says the almost astonishing thing: 'Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' "Now, then, granting that every day of our lives we have to face temptation, how are we to set about it? We have seen that temptation lies in the projection on the human area of our life of the animal and of the savage. I think the first thing we have to do is to deal decisively with those two parts of our nature. 'I keep my body under and bring it into subjection, lest when I have pleaded to others, I myself, should be a cast-away.' (St. Paul.) "The energy that leads to sin must be transformed into an energy that leads to virtue, so that, when the desire to do something wrong comes in, instead of trying to suppress that desire, we have simply to turn the helm in the right direction; and, in the new channel, it will not only save us from a fall which we should have had, if we allowed it to go the other way, but it will carry us higher towards the new life.

"Now, I have tried to explain the way in which any poor mortal here can rise above himself and be a man. I care not how far he has dropped. It is a historical fact that a man can be saved to the uttermost. . . . You can say to me: 'Is there no religion in this?' It is all religion! You say: 'Do I need to put more religion into it?' The more the better! There is no hope for the new life unless a man has religion. . . . 'Without Me ye can do nothing.' Your life will go out. The man who lives in Christ can not go wrong. He will be kept. In the nature of things he must be kept. Sin is abolished in the presence of Jesus Christ.

"If any man takes this seriously and means for the future not to keep up the sham fight he has been keeping up to wage, and determined to get at the bottom of things, let me ask him for a few days from this time to treat himself as a man who has been very ill and dare not do anything. Let him consider himself a convalescent for a few weeks and take care where he goes, what he reads, what he looks at, and what the people he speaks to. He is not strong enough for the outer air. When he first begins the new life he is young and tender. Therefore, let him beware of the first few days. Mortality is greatest among children for the first few hours, then it is greater for the first few days, then it is great for the next few months, and lessens as the children grow older.

"If you are careful not to catch cold for the first few weeks after you begin to lead a new life you will succeed. But if you do tomorrow what you did today you will go wrong because you are not strong enough to resist. You will have to build up this new body cell by cell, day by day, just as the old body of temptation was built up.

"If there be any man who knows of another man who is in that convalescent condition, let him take care, and neither by jest, or word, or temptation throw that man back. Stand by him if you know such a man. If you, yourself, happen to be the man do not be ashamed to get somebody else to back you and go along with you. Very few men can lead a solitary Christian life. You will find it a great source of strength to get another man interested in you and helping you. You can help each other.—W. P. McL. in The Antidote.

ACCOUNTING FOR PART OF IT

"To the non-Catholic in the army the importance of the Catholic chaplain is a mystery," notes Valerian in the Brooklyn Tablet. "He dresses in khaki like the rest of the officers but gets much more respect and appreciation from the men. A curious non-Catholic soldier, anxious to understand the mystery, approached an Irish soldier, and said: 'Is it true that the Catholic priest is a very smart man, Mike?' 'You bet it is,' said Mike, smiling. 'Why shouldn't he be? Doesn't he study at school and college all his life; then doesn't he go to the seminary for four years

longer, and then, when he is ordained a priest, don't we Catholics tell him all we know?' 'No wonder he is smart,' said the questioner as he walked away smiling."

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JULY 9.—ST. EPHREM, DEACON St. Ephrem is the light and glory of the Syrian Church. A mere youth, he entered on the religious life at Nisibis, his native place. Long years of retirement taught him the science of the Saints, and then God called him to Edessa, there to teach what he had learned so well. He defended the Faith against heresies, in books which have made him known as the Prophet of the Syrians. Crowds hung upon his words. Tears used to stop his voice when he preached. He trembled and made his hearers tremble at the thought of God's judgments; but he found in compunction and humility the way to peace, and he rested with unshaken confidence in the mercy of our blessed Lord. "I am setting out," he says, speaking of his own death, "I am setting out on a journey hard and dangerous. Thee, O Son of God, I have taken for my Visitation. When I am hungry I will feed on Thee. The infernal fire will not venture near me, for it cannot bear the fragrance of Thy Body and Thy Blood?" His hymns won the hearts of the people, drove out the hymns of the Gnostic heretics, and gained for him the title which he bears in the Syrian Liturgy to this day—the Harp of the Holy Ghost. Bassorata as he was by nature, from the time he entered religion no one ever saw him angry. Abounding in labors till the last, he toiled for the suffering poor at Edessa in the famine of 378, and there lay down to die in extreme old age. What was the secret of success so various and so complete? Humility, which made him distrust himself, and trust God. Till his death, he wept for the slight sins committed in the thoughtlessness of boyhood. He refused the dignity of the priesthood. "I," he told St. Basil, whom he went to see at the bidding of the Holy Spirit, "I am that Ephrem who have wandered from the path of heaven." Then bursting into tears, he cried out, "O my father, have pity on a sinful wretch, and lead me on the narrow way."

JULY 10.—THE SEVEN BROTHERS, MARTYRS, AND ST. FELICITAS, THEIR MOTHER The illustrious martyrdom of these Saints happened at Rome, under the Emperor Antoninus. The seven brothers were the sons of St. Felicitas, a noble, pious, Christian widow in Rome, who, after the death of her husband, served God in a state of continence and employed herself wholly in prayer, fasting, and works of charity. By the public and edifying example of this lady and her whole family many idolaters were moved to renounce the worship of their false gods, and to embrace the Faith of Christ. This excited the anger of the heathen priests, who complained to the emperor that the boldness with which Felicitas publicly practised the Christian religion drew many from the worship of the immortal gods, who were the guardians and protectors of the empire, and that, in order to appease these

false gods, it was necessary to compel this lady and her children to sacrifice to them. Publius, the prefect of Rome, caused the mother and her sons to be apprehended, and brought before him, and, addressing her, said, "Take pity on your children, Felicitas; they are in the bloom of youth, and may aspire to the greatest honors and preferments." The holy mother answered, "Your pity is really impious, and the compulsion to which you exhort me would make me the most cruel of mothers." Then turning herself towards her children, she said to them, "My sons, look up to heaven, where Jesus Christ with His Saints expects you. Be faithful in His love, and fight courageously for your souls." Publius, being exasperated at this behavior, commanded her to be cruelly buffeted; he then called the children to him one after another and used many artful speeches, mingling promises with threats to induce them to adore the gods. His arguments and threats were equally in vain, and the brothers were condemned to be scourged. After being whipped, they were remanded to prison, and the prefect, despairing to win their resolution, laid the children to him one after another. Antoninus gave an order that they should be sent to different judges, and be condemned to different deaths. Januarius was scourged to death with whips loaded with plummets of lead. The two next, Felix and Philip were beaten with clubs till they expired. Sylvanus, the fourth, was thrown headlong down a steep precipice. The three youngest, Alexander, Vitalis, and Martinus, were beheaded, and the same sentence was executed upon the mother four months later.

JULY 12.—ST. JOHN GAULBERT St. John Gaulbert was born at Florence, A. D. 999. Following the profession of arms at that troubled period, he became involved in a blood feud with a noble knight. One Good Friday, as he was riding into Florence accompanied by armed men, he encountered his enemy in a place where neither could avoid the other. John would have slain him; but his adversary, who was totally unprepared to fight, fell upon his knees with his arms stretched out in the form of a cross, and implored him for the sake of Our Lord's holy Passion, to spare his life. John said to his enemy, "I cannot refuse what you ask in Christ's name. I grant you your life, and I give you my friendship. Pray that God may forgive me my sin." Grace triumphed. A humble and changed man, he entered the Church of St. Miniato, which was near; and whilst he prayed, the figure of our crucified Lord, before which he was kneeling, bowed its head toward him as if to ratify his pardon. Abandoning the world, he gave himself up to prayer and penance in the Benedictine Order. Later he was led to found the congregation called of Vallombrosa, from the shady valley a few miles from Florence, where he established his first monastery. Once the enemies of the Saint came to his convent of St. Salvi, plundered it, and set fire to it, and having treated the monks with ignominy, beat them and wounded them. St. John rejoiced. "Now," he said, "you are true monks. Would that I myself had had the honor of being with you when the soldiers came, that I might have had a share in the glory of your crowns!" He fought manfully against simony, and in many ways promoted the interest of the Faith in Italy. After a life of great austerity, he died whilst the angels were singing round his bed, July 12, 1073.

DEPICTS AIR RAIDS IN BATTLE ZONES

FATHER WOLFE WRITES OF THE DANGERS BESSETTING PRIESTS AND SISTERS

The danger that besets the priests and Sisters who are laboring for the benefit of the people in the battle zones "over there" are shown in an interesting account received by The Catholic Standard and Times from the Rev. Joseph L. N. Wolfe, formerly of St. Patrick's Church and now an army chaplain in France.

Father Wolfe vividly describes the air raids and the dangers incurred from the bombs and from the shrapnel from "anti-guns." In telling how the boche visited a town in which his troops were quartered, for three successive nights, Father Wolfe incidentally mentioned a narrow escape which he encountered. A warning whistle is always sounded when the boche approaches, and every one retreats to the cellar. The "anti-guns," in defense, then set up a barrage to kill the boche, if possible, or at least keep him far enough off to destroy his aim. Father Wolfe on this particular occasion ignored the danger and a good-sized piece of shrapnel came through the old-fashioned tile roof, lath, ceiling and floor, and landed in a corridor close to his room. After that Father Wolfe went to the cellar.

Father Wolfe says that the boche seldom hits his mark, but that the greatest danger is from the falling shrapnel of our own guns. He said that if the air raids were not so frequent there would be no more danger of being struck by a bomb from an aeroplane than there would be of being struck by lightning in a severe electrical storm. He adds, however, that while the air raid lasts it is really exciting.

HOSPITALS BOMBED; SISTERS KILLED

Father Wolfe's communication contained an account of a night air raid on a hospital which told how many Sisters, officers and attendants were killed. Yet despite the dangers, the Sisters went from bed to bed consoling and cheering the helpless sick and the dying. The doctors urged the "brave angels" to use the words of one of the physicians, to take refuge in the bomb proof shelters, but they insisted on staying with their patients and attending to their wants, as though the usual peace of the hospital prevailed. Some of the nuns had real arduous tasks, as many of the patients were under treatment that required constant attention. There were some with limbs suspended, some with fractured bones under running water, and some whose positions had to be changed frequently. All received the same kind care and attention.

One of the invalid soldiers gave the following account of the experience. "It is had enough to be bombed when you are fit and active, but to lie here unable to move, with the fever making you a bit light-headed, and the pain giving you a dread of any further shock or blow, and to hear those awful explosions going on close by and the cries of those who hit, and to feel that any moment it may be your turn to go through it—that's something I do not think I could bear.

"The only thing that did me good was to see the Sister go from one to the other, calm and quiet and as plucky as could be. What I felt was, 'She can't be going around in that way if one of those things is coming in here. If the Sisters are like that, we men can't let our upper lip stiffen.' Why, in the midst of it all she brought me a drink, just as she does every night, and all of them alike, heaven bless them!"

PRIESTS' PRESENCE DEEPLY AFFECTS TROOPS

Like the Sisters in the hospitals, the priests heroically minister to the needs of the men at the front. Father Wolfe says that the mere presence of the priest in the army has a benedict effect upon the soldiers. If the priest is near the men feel all right. The way the men respond to the calls of the priest is truly edifying, and when a chaplain enters a town the faces of the boys 'light up,' and the first question asked is when the confessional is to be heard. The chaplains spend a day and a night in each village so as to be able to attend to all the needs of the men.

The hospitality and the welcome given the American priests by the French cures has even exceeded all expectations. Father Wolfe says that in some of the villages he found churches without cures, as they were away to the War. At the time of his writing he had to look after the spiritual needs of soldiers scattered around nine quaint and interesting villages. He tells of ministering to their needs as follows:

"Besides the two Catholic chaplains in this division, there are at present to Irish priests, chaplains in this district, Fathers Eugene Daley and John McBrearty, and they were a great help to us. On Friday last Father Daley and myself rode our horses around in the rain to the different villages arranging for Masses for Sunday. We found one cure who could speak English enough to hear confessions, and we promptly delegated faculties to him and set him to work. Father Daley heard confessions and said Mass in two towns and I did the same in towns twelve miles apart. The cures welcomed us and the Americans generally, saying we can use the churches at any time, and that they are glad we are here, and they hope we will have a pleasant stay, and if it were not for the fact that it takes us away from our own homes, they would have us stay here always."

"WE REALLY MEAN BUSINESS" That the admiration for the American soldiers is general in France is shown by the following paragraph. "Already they have received the highest praise both from the native peasants and from the officers who are here demonstrating to us. They shine forth as fine specimens of sturdy manhood and manifest much 'pep' and manhood. The peasants are in admiration of the Americans and are taken with their great stature and businesslike demeanor. And, by this time, we really mean business."

The demonstrations to which Father Wolfe refers is the gas mask tests. All of the men were equipped with helmets, gas masks and brand new guns of the latest and best model. They were likewise "gassed" to make sure that their masks did not leak, and Father Wolfe says that the helmets are the toughest manufactured. This is shown by the fact that an officer emptied his seven-shot on one of them at close range and only dented it.

Father Wolfe tells how good naturedly the soldiers bear their little trials, as follows: "Of course, the soldier in France has many inconveniences to put up with; our food is doled out to us in rations, and we do not have the variety we have been accustomed to, although this will improve later. There is no electric light. The ordinary light is the candle. Oil lamps are a luxury. I am writing this letter now by candle light in the house of the cure of the little town near which our headquarters is located. But everybody accepts the situation with good cheer and perfect contentment."—Philadelphia Standard and Times.

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Man's conscience is the oracle of God.—Byron.

There are many gifts that we can envy in others, yet if we had them they would only be a hindrance; if they were necessary for us, God would have given them.—Father Maturin.

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