

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

AIN'T IT FINE TODAY

Sure this world is full of trouble—
I ain't said it ain't,
Lord, I've had enough, and double
Reason for complaint;
Rain and Storm have come to fret
me
Shies were often gray;
Thorns and brambles have beset me
On the road—but, say,
Ain't it fine today?

What's the use of always weepin',
Making trouble last?
What's the use of always keepin'
Thinkin' of the worst?
Each must have his tribulation—
Water with his wine;
Life, it ain't no celebration,
Trouble—I've had mine—
But, today is fine!

It's today that I am livin',
Not a month ago,
Havin' lost my job, givin'
As time wills it so.
Yesterday a cloud of sorrow
Fell across the way;
It may rain again tomorrow,
It may rain—but say,
Ain't it fine today?

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

A historic and instructive story is related of the great sculptor, Michelangelo. A client whose statue the artist was making showed great interest in watching the progress of the work. He saw it grow gradually into form, and finally when he thought it had progressed far enough to be completed, he told the sculptor that he was ready to take it. But the artist was not through with it. He told his client that the statue was not finished yet, that he wanted to bring out a tendon here or a vein there, or the like.

"Oh, these are mere trifles," said the client. "Yes," said the artist, "but trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle." This sentence has gone down into history. And well it might, for it sums up a whole philosophy of good workmanship in any field. It is a fitting parallel to that other saying about a similar province of human activity, which declares that genius is largely an infinite capacity for taking pains. Immediately some way may conjure up in his mind the picture of some pallid young man with an artistic temperament which scarcely concerned him with the task of furnishing him with a copious supply of nervousness, indignation, biliousness and general irritability. But that is not the kind of pains to which the adage refers. It refers to the pains which one should take with his work whatever it may be, if he would make it a masterpiece.

Some of our "masterpieces" of the present day look rather as if they had been turned out with the lightning speed of a modern machine, especially if the idea was to run in competition with them. Yet it was a first masterpiece of its kind. And it was not made in three-quarters of an hour. It was the fruit of careful attention to detail. A comparison of the first locomotive with one of the monster train-pullers of today might excite a laugh, but both were the work of geniuses who took pains with little things. And what a number of highly important little things one can see in the complex system of a modern locomotive. A linotype printing machine is "almost human," so complicated is its make-up and so many its accomplishments—including, of course, that of providing the unsuspecting reader with a misprint which can easily beat the most subtle epigram for the provocation of mischief. What a wealth of attention to detail was involved in the production of such a machine!

The newspaper, which is taken so much for granted as a commonplace of our modern life—what a mass of complicated detail is involved in its production. What nerve-racking care has to be expended in the attempt to keep it as free from typographical errors as time will allow! Compare the "horseless carriage" of the first days of motor vehicles with its luxurious modern offspring. Both are the fruit of careful concentration on detail.

If all this is true of the invention and production of material things so also is it true in spiritual matters. The Saint did not become such suddenly. He had his grace and help from God, of course, but without painstaking attention to the details of the spiritual life, the careful rooting out of small faults and the gradual polishing off of rough surfaces, he would scarcely achieve the heights of spiritual heroism.

Did a Chrysostom become the great orator and the great Saint that he was without carefully developing his gifts and using what some impatient minds might consider "trifles" as stepping stones to the heights which he reached? Did St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas build up their great systems of thought by suddenly going out into a garden one fine day, and plucking them out of the air? Aside from

whatever inherent genius and whatever divine aid they had, they were subject to the provision that man must earn his living by the sweat of his brow—and this applies not only to the manual laborer, but to the intellectual laborer as well. They had to apply themselves systematically to the manifold details of the subjects in which they achieved greatness and did great work. Without that process, mere genius would not get them very far.

A man may admit that he can write a whole system of philosophy out of his own head in two weeks, without reference to anything that has gone before, but it will be a makeshift. A brilliant young amateur may sit down and write a play "just as good as Shakespeare's" in six or seven days, but its life will be short.

In short, "make haste slowly" is a fairly wise motto even yet. "Leap before you look" is not the best of advice for a horseman on the edge of a steep precipice. A great masterpiece is seldom produced by a great genius except after days, weeks, months, perhaps years of indefatigable labor. The idea for one may flash upon him in much less than that time, but it will take him a long time to develop it.

Attention to detail is the secret of greatness. It may be that small things annoy us and we seek the greater. But that very neglect of trifles is what destroys perfection. No true words were ever spoken except those by the great sculptor when he gave to mankind his perfect of success: "Trifles make perfection and perfection is no trifle."—The Pilot.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

IT'S SERVICE THAT MEASURES SUCCESS

It isn't the cut of the clothes that you wear,
Nor the stuff out of which they are made,
Though chosen with taste and fastidious care,
And if it's the price that you paid;
It isn't the size of your pile in the bank,
Nor the number of acres you own,
It isn't a question of prestige or rank,
Nor of sinew, and muscle and bone;
It isn't the servants that come at your call,
It isn't the things you possess,
Whether many, or little—or nothing at all;
It's service that measures success.

It isn't a question of name, or of length
Of an ancestral pedigree,
Nor a question of mental vigor and strength,
Nor a question of social degree;
It isn't a question of city or town,
Nor a question of doctrine or creed,
It isn't a question of fame or renown,
Nor a question of valorous deed;
But he who makes somebody happy each day,
And he who gives heed to distress,
Will find satisfaction the richest of pay.

For it's service that measures success.
—The Cave Scout, in Boy's Life

A REAL BOY

I met a boy this summer a real genuine boy, eleven years old and full of love and play. Yet he was a gentleman, polite and exceedingly thoughtful. Of etiquette he was a master, knew and did the proper thing at the right time. Still he was a boy and nothing pruder or older man could mark of training. "Thanks" and "pardon me" sounded with ease and natural on his lips. A mother's care is there, I thought. Yes, a good Catholic mother who had trained him well. Furthermore he knew his religion well and his knowledge of Bible History and the lives of some of the saints were astonishing. —The Monitor.

A GIRL'S MANNERS

A knowledge of the small and fine conventions of behavior stamps a girl like a catmark on gold, says an able writer in a recent issue of The Queen's Work. It classifies her, and it is often a business advantage. I knew a girl who was refused a teaching position in a high-grade school because she passed her plate to another at the luncheon to which the head preceptress had the canny habit of inviting candidates for the position. I know another who was interviewed as possible secretary to a distinguished professional man, and who failed to make good because when he assigned her a chair by his desk for their first talk she pulled the chair forward instead of sitting in it where it was placed. The graduate of a well known college for teachers once wrote to a certain professor of English in a famous university, offering himself—this was a boy, not a girl—as the reader and general assistant, and he addressed the envelope "Prof." instead of writing out the word Professor in full. The envelope was returned to the dean of the college with the inquiry: "Is this how you train your candidates?" Both the envelope and the inquiry were posted on the college bulletin board, where I saw them. In these instances the combination of good breeding and social savoir faire was essential, and the demand for it is now everywhere increasingly made.

Now give me your attention. All the rules of good manners arise from conditions naturally demanded by the functioning together of

groups of persons. Thus have arisen the rules of order of clubs and public meetings; thus have arisen the rules of behavior at formal dinners. All of these rules, if analyzed, are based on the consideration of the individual for others. What is this but Catholic teaching? What are we taught from infancy but to put others before ourselves and to consider the pleasure and comfort of others in the exercise of courteous forms. These have been elaborated in various minutiae, but the principle underlying all the important and permanent social forms is the same—to think of the wishes of the other one. When your hostess passes you a plate at the meal to which she has invited you, it means that this is the portion she intended for you, not for another; it means that she desires to honor you by helping you first, and you must cooperate with her wish.

Consideration for others, too, prescribes that a host, in offering a second helping, will avoid the use of the word "more," as an unkind reminder that the guest already had some. He or she will say: "Let me give you a piece of the white meat," or "I have a little slice of chicken for you," or any other form of well-remembered invitation which is free from allusion to a previous helping. Similarly, it is not only perfectly correct for the guest to accept, it is also a compliment to the cooking. But if the guest should be on sufficiently intimate terms at a friend's house to ask for a second helping it is correct to use the word "more" in making this request, not to show an ungrateful forgetfulness of having had some.

That affair of not moving the chair eighteen feet in another person's house you should not take liberties with the furniture. If your host places a chair for you, sit exactly where he placed it, even if the sun is in your eyes. It is his business to look out for that. Neither will the guest for a longer time move or change the furniture in the room assigned to him; it is not polite to do this even where you room and board, without courteously asking permission of your landlady.

To abbreviate a title of distinction in addressing a letter is not respectful. Neither is it respectful to sign your initials at the close of a letter. Your full name is called for by courtesy, and in very formal correspondence or in writing formal invitations it is correct also to write your middle name in full. This is to show respect and courtesy to the one to whom you write.

Other conventions based on consideration and respect for others are those which demand that in leaving the room at the close of a call you shall not turn your back on your hostess; that you shall not rise to leave after she has been the last one to speak, but after you have said something; that you may offer your hand on leaving, but not on arriving—then it is the privilege of your hostess; that you never offer your hand to older persons or more distinguished persons; wait for them. And never do you offer your hand to a priest, for his hands are consecrated, and he always the one to say whether or not they shall be used in greeting.

If in fulfilling these and all other formal rules of behavior you keep in the background of your thought the deeper principles, on which they rest, you will perform them with more grace and charm, and you will not fail to commend the training of our Church.—Catholic Transcript.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER

(By the Rev. C. Monnif, D.D.)

Two days ago I received a hurried call. A man had fallen from his wagon out on the prairie, twenty miles away. He was dying. I set out with all possible speed, and after a quick drive and a long search found the poor fellow. He was lying where he had fallen, conscious, but stamped with the ghastly seal of death. His spine was broken; he could not live more than a few hours. The doctor was there. He had examined and probed the nature of the injury; his work was finished. Friends and neighbors were around the victim, ready to do all that was possible to alleviate the man's suffering.

But the doctor and the crowd were helpless. When the priest knelt beside him on the grass, his pale face was lighted up with a beautiful hope, and he said with touching pathos: "Father, I was waiting for you!" I motioned the crowd away, heard his confession, administered the Viaticum, and anointed him. When I had finished, I got his story from his dying lips:

"When I was thrown from the wagon I couldn't budge. The mules pulled away, and stopped to feed at the nearest haystack. I knew that if I were left alone I should be dead in a little while—dead without the last Sacraments. I could not call; and if my voice had been strong, there was no one to hear me.

"It was here, a couple of miles from my brother's, the nearest house, and there wasn't a soul in sight on the prairie. Paralyzed with pain and fear, I turned to God and prayed: 'Dear Lord, I don't want to die here alone and without the priest! If you refuse to help me, I am lost. Please send the mules to my brother's house. When he sees them he will understand. No sooner had I finished my prayer than the

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mules left the haystack and pulled away, never stopping till they got into my brother's yard."

Two incidents in this story are distinctly supernatural. The beasts, tired and hungry, left the haystack where they were enjoying their feed, and, instead of returning to their own stable, five miles distant, they went another way, nearer, but strange to them.

A crowd of witnesses bear testimony to these facts. It is all so simple, so sublime. When St. Peter was sinking in the waters of Lake Gennesareth, he cried: "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus, stretching forth His hand, took hold of him and said: "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" This miracle has less of wonderment in it. Our Lord was visible there, and somehow one expects Him to do what He did.

We may turn to the other texts: commentaries without end have been written on them; but they leave one, even if enlightened, unmoved. God is the great, competent commentator of His own words. At sundry times and in divers ways He speaks to us. His word, however spoken, in whatever time or place, is living and effectual, more piercing than a two-edged sword, and reaching to the division of the soul and the spirit. His word is a work.

The moving of a mountain is an Orientalism for the setting aside of an apparently immovable obstacle. But faith makes possible the impossible. Nothing is hard to God. It is the hitching of man's feebleness to God's omnipotence that, while moving obstacles, moves us even to the division of the soul and the spirit. Command the mountains to cast themselves into the sea and they will rise up and obey—when you are God's yokefellow. With infinite condescension He modernizes and localizes a text that has been a stone of stumbling for many critics. "When I am weak, then I am strong. When I see and confess my impotence then all things are possible to me."

Here lay a poor man on the lonely prairie, with his back broken and his heart breaking. He was leaving a young widow and two little orphans in isolated poverty. All his earthly hopes and plans were as dead as the withered grass on which he lay, a plain, simple soul, unlettered, and unknown outside his own narrow rustic circle. Him God chose as His pen on His torch to shed a new light on a dark passage of Scripture that has puzzled the brains of learned theologians. "Oh, the depths of the riches, of the wisdom, of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways."

THE IRISH AT THE FRONT

FRENCH WRITER PAYS GLOWING TRIBUTE TO VALOR OF IRISH TROOPS

Extracts from "With Our British Allies in the Field," by Ferdinand Laurent.

(Extracts from "With Our British Allies in the Field," notes and recollections of a French liaison officer, Ferdinand Laurent, printed in Paris.)

The Irish troops were the first to conceive the happy and truly heroic idea of carrying out a veritable football match while rushing to the attack of the German trenches.

The history of the Irish regiments in this war is one of the most inspiring that could be told. Mons, Alene, Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, Givenchy, Hooge, Loos, La Somme—the Irish name is associated with all the great events of the War! The Irish fight like heroes, and it is an uncontestable fact that their immortal courage is drawn in great part from their religious faith and their exalted national spirit.

They go into battle with their standards. The regiment of Munster (many times designated and as often reconstructed and which might pass as a type of an Irish regiment) has a celebrated green standard with the gold harp embossed in the right corner, and in the center the royal tiger above the inscription "Munster." Behind this standard Paddy and Pat, rich would go to the end of the world. This example among so many others equally glorious, will give a moving idea of the spirit in which the Irish march to battle.

On the 8th of May, 1915, eve of the battle of Neuve-Chapelle, 800 men, the complete strength of the 2nd batt. of the Munster regiment received Holy Communion from the hands of their chaplain, Father G. Then, foreseeing the fate before them, each man carefully inscribed his name and address on his prayer book.

At nightfall the battalion marched out to take its place in the trenches. At the entrance of Rue du Bois stood

a little ruined chapel and inside its stone niche a crucifix. Colonel R. halted the regiment and the men ranged themselves on these sides of each company. The colonel, the captain adjutant and the mounted chaplain took up their station in the centre. Then every knee was bent and in the glory twilight the priest gave the last absolution to all. Then Father G. dismounted and passed through the ranks, saying good-bye to the officers and exhorting the men to uphold at all costs the honor of the regiment in the coming fight.

An old saying assures us that an Irishman is born either a soldier or a priest. Their chaplains are admirable soldier priests. They are in every sense of the word leaders of men!

Many also are those whose names are inscribed on the glorious list of "Died on the field of honor." The first Catholic priest killed in the late War was Jesuit Father Grogan, chaplain of the Irish Guards, who met his death on the 11th of Oct. 1915, during the fighting which took place around Hill 70, after the battle of the Somme. Mortally wounded by a shell, before being picked up, he had the courage to drag himself along for some minutes in order to give absolution to his dying men in the midst of whom he fell.

Heroes example which has since been repeated on every field. At dawn the battle took place and in the evening, of the 800 Irish who had marched to the fray there remained but 200 men and 3 officers.

A RARE ATTRIBUTE

THE REVERENCE OF OLD SEEMS TO BE PASSING AWAY

It is rather sad to observe that, with other good things of a by-gone age, reverence, that noble attribute of the soul, is also passing. The modern attitude of mind has very little reverence for anything. It would be amusing, if it were not so hugely unbecoming, to see how whitely of boys and girls dispense themselves nowadays from the reverence and reticences which their elders carefully observed even in their maturest years. Every one can talk about everything. Everyone can pass judgment on everything. The respectful attitude of mind is an anachronism. To be up to date one must be more or less flippantly familiar with even the gravest subjects and offhand with even the most serious themes.

This frame of mind is the more unbecoming in youngsters but they have no monopoly of it. It is as fashionable among older folk. It chatters at teas and twitters from parlors, wastes good ink in bulky magazines and even truts in bindings of best-selling books.

There is a precious smartness to much of the writing of the day that is most humorously shallow. It is quite surprising that the popular writers of the time, making flings at this or that time-honored and respectable subject, do not sometimes catch a glimpse of their own shallowness and stop to blush and stammer. But if they stammer at all it is with eagerness to attack some new subject more aggressively than they have landed the last. As to blushing, it is a lost art. An honest blush is a sign of shame and reverence.

Give us back the gift of reverence! In a world where there is nothing to revere there is nothing worth living for, still less dying for. Heroic men were so because they were true to a great ideal and revered it. When men or times lose reverence they also lose their great ideals.—The Echo.

SILENCE

They who can be silent when they are tempted to say something cutting or reproving possess a strong sword of defense against things to which they yield in a way that means their defeat. It is a great thing to have such perfect control of the tongue that one will not allow it to lead one into talking when it should keep still. A very serene old man once told me that he felt he had kept a great deal of anger out of the world simply by not "answering back." He explained this by adding:

"You see if you never answer back an angry person's wrath will die out a lot quicker than if you answer back in his own kind. Keeping still yourself is one of the best ways in the world to keep mad folks from getting madder and madder."

Nothing is more useless than to try to argue with an angry person. Serene silence on our part will surely lessen the angry words of others.—Catholic Bulletin.

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