

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

THE PATH OF DUTY
Long I rebelled and would not set my feet
In Duty's path, but ever turned aside,
Seeking for ways I thought to find more wide,
Question for things I thought to find more sweet.
I said: "Hard is this task I ought to do,
What shall I gain, if, working till the end
I take this broken bit of chain and mend
Its sundered links and make them firm and new?"
"Cannot another do it quite as well,
Aye, better; wherefore should my life be spent
In thankless labor, why was this work sent?
I want it even less than I can tell!"
There came a voice that whispered down the wind
In answer to my cry, it bade me turn,
Beseeching me, "Take up the task you spurn,
In it alone shall you true solace find."
At last I wept, obedient to the call,
And what a glorious harvest did I reap!
I found the road was neither rough nor steep,
And Duty's path the fairest path of all.

—ELIZABETH SCOLLARD

THE DIVIDING LINE

All men retain vivid impressions which some unusual circumstance in life has made upon their natures. So sensitive is the soul to impressions that sometimes they remain all through life, making men more gentle or more distrustful, more morose or more optimistic as the case may be.
Lacordaire, whose soul was keenly alive to impressions in his childhood, says: "A sad and impressive enough to inflict upon a child's soul an incurable wound, or so to strengthen him in the way of virtue that he will never leave it without remorse."
Undoubtedly the love of one's fellow men is a great help on the road of life, and the unkindness of men a great hindrance to joy and peace. Few rely sufficiently upon God to place themselves in the condition of the poor beggar who, sitting on the roadside, professed himself to have never known an unhappy hour. Most men depend largely upon their friends or associates in a great measure for happiness and peace of soul.
In youth, a beautiful moment in a lifetime, we give love and win it quickly. "In our prime," says Lacordaire, "we know too much and no longer are apt to give so much pleasure. The heart has less calls upon it and is more wary, and neither gives nor receives so fully." Unfortunately this is true. Few men become more generous as they advance in years with that holy generosity which drinks in happiness like sunshine and gives it out unstintingly to all.
The impression of pain is the most vivid in life and most difficult to overcome. The poor drudge, Smike, of whom we read with tears in our eyes in the entrancing pages of "Nicholas Nickleby," injured to hardships and cruelty in a Yorkshire school, could never in happier times fully overcome the horror of his childhood. Happiness, coming so late and in such generous measure, was too much for a sensitive and long-suffering soul, and death broke the feeble cord of life.
If men were fully sensible of the impression which their meanness in significant acts produce in the souls of others, many would weigh them more carefully ere they suffered them to be entered in the Book of Life.
A big, understanding nature which can allow for the weakness of others as well as for its own, is something for which to thank God, and there are men of this type.
Such a man is the head of a large manufacturing plant in one of our industrial centres. Having worked his way from the first rung of the ladder, he now stands unassumingly at the very top. Hundreds of those in his employ attest to the popularity of this truly big man. But perhaps nothing can better serve as an illustration of his greatness than the following incident:
Among the valued clerks in his employment who held most responsible trusts, one man seemed to have fallen down strangely in his work. His disposition was changing as it were by slow degrees; he was undependable, morose and contentious. The report of this change naturally came to the ears of the head of the firm.
In the business world there is slight chance that a man's private grievances will interest his firm, nor will they make allowances when suddenly, after an enviable record, the quality of his work falls off.
The big man in his office started to think. His good judgment told him that there was a reason for this change in the record of his valued clerk. He determined to find it out before acting in any way.
He found that the man's domestic affairs were not going smoothly. There was lack of oil in the spokes. A home seemed to be tottering on the brink of a precipice, and unless someone interfered in a quiet way,

there was danger of a catastrophe, for "a house divided against itself shall fall."
The big man quietly called the clerk and told him that he had arranged for him to take a business trip through the West, and that he wished him to start within twenty-four hours.
It was done. Change of scene, solitude with his thoughts, appreciation of the confidence reposed in him and an opportunity to miss the associations of his home, effected their good work. The man returned, took his place at his desk renewed in mind and body, and has gone on to this day in prosperity and peace.
In a Catholic College a certain boy had been giving more or less trouble to his teacher. He was finally sent to the office of the Prefect of Discipline for chastisement. But the Prefect about to reprimand him severely, had a sudden thought: He wondered whether there was a reason for this unruly deportment, and if the boy was wholly to blame.
So he questioned him kindly in regard to his affairs. And he found, like the manufacturer, that there was something wrong at home. Unhappily neglected, and the boy felt that he was justified in exacting a price from the innocent teacher in the classroom. Needless to say the impression of the kindness which the Prefect's words and treatment left in the boy's mind effected the desired change.
It is to be deplored that the conventionality of our day does not permit the exhibition of heart. In one of his letters, Lacordaire says: "The stiffness of the age does not allow me to express the love I really feel for you. I love you at once like a friend and a child, because I am at the dividing line from which one may examine at the same moment life's beginning and end."
The dividing line of life comes to many men long before the middle years. There comes a day early in the lives of most men when they stand face to face with a moral crisis. Presumption and despair fight for the mastery; which it is he only God knows. But unless some one of those who pass by steps a little out of his way to speak an affectionate word or to press the hand of the tempted and tried one, there is grave danger of a soul catastrophe.
He is a happy man who can attract others to himself. The most beautiful epitaph of Father de Ravignan is contained in these words of his biographer: "Souls were naturally drawn to him. He loved them, and they loved him in return."
Great intellect or special talents are not needed in order to effect a strong and beneficent influence on others, simply the art which St. Paul terms as being "All things to all men."—The Pilot.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS
THE LITTLE FLOWER
Knowing that it would burn, she courted fire,
And who shall wish to chide her heart's desire?
For when the little altar-rose was sweet,
And withering beside the candle heat;
And when she saw a beautiful white moth,
His wings drop flaming on the altar cloth—
Long did she ponder, would it not be right
To brave the pain, if she but reach the light,
And be Love's fuel as a moth, a rose,
And find where all earth's bitter beauty goes?
For beauty runneth out as quick as sun,
Quick as a nun lights candles, one by one,
For Vespers; swift as swallow shadows pass,
Or field-mice trickle through the flowing grass,
And so the dwindling starlight told her this:
To turn her white heart to the springs of bliss,
The source of all the garden-brimming light,
So beautiful to flowers, so missed at night
When high the sun holds up his mirror moon
To show 'tis somewhere shining, somewhere noon.
Alas! for all the violet petals shed!
And all last summer's lilies that are dead!
For hollyhocks, laburnum, marigold,
And whatsoever names the flowers hold!
For each her grave has, each her mourning breeze;
But not thy withering, Little Flower, as these!
For thou didst win the mighty Gardener's love,
'Tis seeding-time eternally, above;
And starry soil and loam of azure field
Will give thee substance, and thy colors yield,
And thou shalt blossom bear, undoomed to death,
And for thy breeze know Mary's gentle breath
Where clouds of Angels come, thy cool rain bringing,
And Seraphim, like birds above thee singing!
Spring, happy child, from out the beautiful sod;
Delight the Saints and charm thy Father, God.

THE ASCENSION, MAY 25
Today is the feast of the Ascension, on which we commemorate the last event of our Saviour's visible career. It is one of the oldest feasts of the Church, and comes down to us sanctified by centuries of observance. Mount Olivet is supposed to have been the scene of the miracle, and it has been crowned three times with a memorial church; but in each case the devastating hands of the pagans have destroyed the offering of Christian love and reverence. St. Bonaventure has beautifully spoken of this festival; and after the lapse of so many centuries his words are still laden with the spirit of the Church, and reveal to us the poetic mind of one of the greatest of her preachers:
"Oh, what was it to behold the Lord thus gloriously ascending! Oh! what would it be if any one could see and hear those most blessed spirits and holy souls ascending up with Him! Perchance through joy the soul would be separated from the body, and would ascend also along with them! Never, from the beginning of the world, was there such a festival in the Heavenly Jerusalem, nor will there ever again be one so solemn until the Day of Judgment, when all the elect will be there present with their glorious bodies. Therefore does this solemnity surpass all others. Examine them, and judge if it be not so.
"A great and solemn festival indeed is the Incarnation of Our Lord and the beginning of all our good; but this regards ourselves, and not Him. A great feast is His Nativity, but it regards only ourselves; for it is a subject of compassion so far as regards Him, because He was born to poverty and labors and sufferings. And also it is a subject of joy, because a great festival is that of His Passion, because then all our sins were wiped away; and, as blessed Gregory says, it would have served us nothing to have been born if we had not been redeemed. But this was a subject of joy to us, and not to Him who endured such bitter torments. Moreover, a great and solemn feast is the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus, as well for Him as for us, because He appeared to triumph gloriously, and we were justified; and therefore the Church celebrated it with that singular exclamation of "Hoc dies quam fecit Dominus." And yet this day of the Ascension is still greater, because before it, though Our Lord rose from the grave, yet did He remain on earth; still were the gates of paradise closed; still the holy fathers had not gone to the Father; all which things were perfected in the Ascension. Similarly, a great feast is the day of Pentecost; but, still the object of rejoicing then regards ourselves, and not Our Lord.
"The Ascension is properly the most solemn festival of our Lord Jesus, because on that day He began to sit at the right hand of His Father, and to rest from His labors of redemption. And also it is properly the festival of all the heavenly spirits, because they conceived a new joy on beholding Our Lord, who then for the first time appeared in heaven under the form of humanity. It is also no less properly our festival, because on that day was human nature exalted above the heavens; and because, unless Christ had ascended, the Holy Ghost would not have been given. And therefore St. Bernard

Gather thy strength from His eternal power.
Grow, little maid, forever bloom and flower!
—LEONARD FERREY, S. J.

UNDER MARY'S CARE

It was during the time of Protestant persecution in Great Britain that a Scotch Bishop had to take refuge one night in a poor cottage where on a pallet lay an old man who seemed to have but a few moments to live. To the words of encouragement spoken by the Bishop he replied: "I am at peace, I shall not die." "Of course I hope not," said the Bishop, "but still it is always a good thing to get ready." "I tell you I can not possibly die," replied the dying man with still more energy. And to every consideration put forward by the Bishop to get him to think of eternity he invariably answered: "I shall not die."
"Well then," said the Bishop, who was concealing his rank, showing no outward signs of it because of the persecution, may I ask you why you are so sure that you are not going to die?"
"Are you a Catholic?" asked the sick man.
"Yes I am," replied the Bishop.
"Then," said the sick man, "I can tell you why I shall not die. From the day of my First Communion, I have never missed asking the Blessed Virgin every day not to let me die without a priest at my bedside, and do you think that my mother could fail to answer my prayer? Can you not, and I shall not die."
"How good Mary is!" then exclaimed the Bishop, deeply touched. Then he opened his coat and allowed his pectoral cross to shine in the old man's eyes. "Not only does she send you a priest, but your own Bishop."
The dying man's eyes filled with tears, and looking up to heaven, he said, "Thank you, good Mother, I knew you had answered my prayer." Then turning to the Bishop: "Hear my confession," he said; "now I think I shall die."

THE NEW RELIGION OF CONAN DOYLE
The arrival of Conan Doyle in this country as a propagandist of "Spiritualism" is not without interest. Some may welcome it as evidence that he does not share the general European opinion that Americans are all materialists. The amount of publicity that he is getting serves to show that there is a widespread belief in the supernatural. Most persons, however, will be amused at the seriousness with which Conan Doyle takes himself and his opinions. In the course of a few days he has undertaken to remove, in the most authoritative manner, nearly all of the difficulties that have troubled mankind since the dawn of creation. From his decisions there can be no appeal. He, himself, has received the eternal truths concerning the things unseen, from the spirits themselves—He knows what death is; what it feels like to die; what becomes of us hereafter; how we are punished and how rewarded. And these things, so he says, are not known to him by faith, but by actual experience!
Perhaps, after a more extended visit, he may learn that these tidings from the unseen world that he offers are not brought to us by him for the first time. Sir Oliver Lodge but recently left our shores. He came with the same message, in a rather more modest guise. And we really do remember that "Spiritualism" is not a very modern thing in this country. We have heard of it before.
In fact, it is almost eighty years since the new religion of Conan Doyle was first made known in this country. America even has the credit for being the land of its rebirth, for it is a very ancient superstition. Perhaps Dr. Doyle will be surprised to hear that thousands of people, in the days before the Civil War, petitioned Congress to arrange for a scientific investigation of the spiritualistic phenomena that were taking place at that time, and which were then being offered as proof of supernatural realities.
It is the oldness of "Spiritualism" that is its chief weakness. If it unveils the unseen by proofs that can convince the average man, why is it that the average man has failed to be convinced? Spiritualism has had through the centuries a lurking existence. It has never produced in any country a creed, a church or a code of morals. Still it hangs onto life in the dark corners of the earth, to be re-discovered as a new religion by various trusting souls such as Conan Doyle. To such it comes with all the force of a new revelation, only to lose its strength in a few years in a tangle of conflicting enigmas. It is as though some spiteful spirit of mischief were playing with the hopes and fears of men.
Dr. Doyle tells us that his children are "spiritualists," but that they are too young yet to take part in seances. Why? There is danger then? He recognizes that. The darkened and mysterious chamber is itself an unwholesome place to develop the religious instincts of a child.
When do we become old enough to engage without danger in this practice of communication with the unseen? We do know this, that few people have taken deep interest in Spiritualism for long, without suffering dangerous consequences that manifest themselves in shattered nerves and weakened will.
Catholics will pay heed to the warnings of Holy Mother Church, who has been dealing with "Spiritualism" in its ancient and modern forms from the Day of Pentecost. God has manifested to us all that

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says, that this most glorious solemnity is the consummation and fulfillment of all other solemnities, and the happy termination of the whole journey of our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God—Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

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