

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

A MESSAGE FROM THE SACRED HEART

A message from the Sacred Heart. What may its message be? "My child, my child, give me thy heart..."

THE ENTHUSIAST

The prudent man, says Bulwer Lytton, may direct a State, but it is the enthusiast who regenerates or ruins it.

Looking down through the ages, we find that the men who have left an imperishable imprint on history have not been those who were content simply to plod along.

One day, one moment, an inner voice suggested something stupendous, something heroic. They instantly grasped at the opportunity offered them of becoming agents or factors in a great and wonderful work.

The man who lacks enthusiasm has missed many opportunities and much of the joy of living. True, the disillusionments of mature years have somewhat removed the keen edge of enjoyment of those things which early years bestowed in generous measure.

Who can say what might have resulted had all men yielded to that sweet strong impulse to turn aside from the white glare of the road into some shady nook where, hidden from the crowd, they might traffic in things unseen?

In the memory of most men is some old road winding down through a country town. They can recall its zigzag fence with the spring-time blooms beside the way.

Someone has said that "we look at the heavens nightly, but there are those who, at a certain ineffable moment, catch, as it were, the eye of a star."

Goethe, commenting on the character of Hamlet, says that to him it is clear that Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it.

In the Purgatorio Dante meets with the unfortunate souls who had deferred the execution of a good impulse until they were overtaken by death.

It was said of Sir Thomas More that with a smile on his lips he met Fortune's ugliest scowl. Fortune could not overwhelm him nor disappointment conquer him nor death daunt him.

There was a man who, having broken away from the old schools

of irreligion and vice, had given himself generously and devotedly to the things of the soul. But we read in his memoirs that scarcely had this conquest been attained at the price of tremendous renunciation...

In those far days there were not the remedies at hand for such evils with which we are familiar today. But far from succumbing to discouragement or yielding to a temptation to give up the burden of apostolic life, these pains seemed but to accelerate the holy exaltation with which he pursued a glorious and immortal quest.

Anything which serves to enkindle or to preserve our enthusiasm is well worth cultivation. So, tired men, when cares and anxieties press, sometimes steal away from the busy marts and seek relief and inspiration in some remembered haunt.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

"THE GLADNESS OF HIS SMILE"

We met at Communion this morning. My Saviour and I, His child. He stooped in loving compassion, Gracious and gentle and mild.

And lifted me close to His bosom I felt His Heart-beats the while And all my pain was forgotten, In the Gladness of His Smile.

I told Him all of my sorrow, And some I could not tell, But I did not have to breathe it He knew it all so well.

Then in tones both low and gentle, His loving voice I heard, He told me to bear without murmur Each harsh, unkindly word.

To give myself to others, In kindly pleasant way, And then to save all my sorrows For Him at each close of day.

We parted after Communion, My Saviour and I, for a while But I bore it all day with me—"The Gladness of His Smile."

THE FOLLY OF PRETENDING

How much of our life is made up of pretense? There are very few people indeed, except children, who are absolutely and always natural.

Perhaps the main cause of pretense of all kinds is that it is easier than reality; and this for many reasons, one being that if we really felt all we professed, or were expected to profess, it would be a great strain on our feelings.

There are women—we have all met them—who seem intensely interested in our affairs; who listen breathlessly to all we have to tell them, and are lavish with their congratulations or condolences. And yet we feel instinctively that they take no real interest in us or in our affairs.

There are those, too, who pretend friendship, but who in reality are incapable of the real thing. They like, however, to play with it, as it were, and to act, just as some people like to act at being in love.

Another reason for pretense being easier than reality on many occasions is that there are conventions which almost force pretense on one. There is, for instance, the theory that everyone who has not a happy home, or the most respectable of relations, is in some way inferior.

Even poverty will be enough to make many people think less of one. Such considerations are apt to cause

people to pretend. It is natural, but not worth while. Pretense never is.

To pretend you have more money than you really possess often brings trouble in its train. Take a girl in an office, for instance. She may be quite a clever girl and a good worker, but perhaps she has a poor home to which she herself contributes a large portion of her earnings, leaving very little for her to dress on and for her amusements.

How many marriages have been upset and lives ruined through this indulgence of pretense! During the months prior to the marriage the girl or man may pretend to be everything that is gentle, considerate, and lovable, but after the marriage they are apt to think that the mask can be dropped, and in place of the pretended virtues and reality is shown up.

Instead of all the pretense, let us be our own true selves, and learn to love and sympathize with our fellow creature in a true Christian spirit. It is worth while to earn the good will of those with whom we come into contact by true-hearted friendliness rather than by an assumed friendship or assumed sympathy.

The girl who is her own true self may not appear to have so many admirers or to have such a good time as the one who pretends to be everybody's friend, but in the end she scores. When such a girl makes a friend she makes a friend for life, and her influence is felt in whatever sphere she moves in.

WHAT DO WE READ?

The full extent of parental authority and of parental obligation is not always appreciated. It has been rightly said that the task of training the child requires the genius of the Catholic Church. That task devolves primarily on the parent. Education in the true sense of the word is the formation of habits and among the habits which the child should be taught to acquire is the habit of good reading.

It is scarcely possible to estimate the influence for good or evil which books exercise on character. Reading is the one luxury which rich and poor enjoy. The lesson is more easily learned from the book than from any other source because the book is the teacher of our own selection. For that reason we should be careful in our selection. The good done by good reading is very great; the harm done by bad reading can scarcely be calculated.

It would be interesting to know whether the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Satan has benefited more by the invention of printing. One thing seems clear, namely, that the wave of infidelity, which swept over Europe in this and the last century received its impulse from the pernicious and godless literature in which wicked men vented their hatred of God and His Church. If Satan's kingdom in the world is to have any stability he will owe it to the press.

The world today is flooded with a literature, which derives its inspiration from a godless materialism, and which is slowly and surely corrupting the minds of the young, and moulding their characters according to the principles of pure naturalism.

The corrupting influence of modern literature is exercised not only through the cheap novel, which openly and professedly panders to the sensationalism and

sensuality of the multitude, but through works of science and history. In cheap editions, as well as in morocco bindings, you can buy at any bookstall the writings of the infidels and agnostics of the past century and this. There are given to the world as the collected wisdom of the age. The pretended conclusions of science are palmed off on the public as established facts without any attempt at proof.

As to the favorite novel of the day, there is scarcely an effort made to gild the vice which it extols. It is more often than not an open attack on social virtue and morality and upon all that is held holy and sacred. The vilest passions of the human heart, all that is sensual and grovelling in human nature, are often made the attributes of the hero or the heroine of the piece.

There is too a class of novel which is not flagrant bad, in which vice is not recommended or virtue depreciated, but which cannot be read with impunity. Even the best works of atheistic fiction cannot be read without a diminution of the grace of God in the soul. It is through the reading of literature of this sort that even well meaning and earnest Catholics sometimes come to adopt views on life which are entirely out of harmony with the faith they profess.

In this respect our daily press is by no means above censure. In what way is the good of the community served by the publication of the details of divorce cases and sexual crimes? Our daily papers boast of the power they wield and the influence they exert. In publishing the indecencies of court cases they can scarcely be described as promoters of public morality. Familiarity with crime is not a knowledge to be sought after or be proud of.

THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

The quest of happiness is older than Tutankhamen tomb. It began when God created Adam, and it has persisted ever since, and will continue until the last man on earth has yielded his soul to his Creator. Happiness is the end of man, for we are taught in the first page of our Catechism that God made us to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in the next.

All the trouble in the world, all the sin in the world, all the evil in the world, and consequently all the unhappiness have come from pursuing happiness in the wrong way. "One thing that the Middle Ages were sensible about," remarked Mr. Chesterton in a recent interview, "was that they realized, what the Catholic Church continues to realize, that happiness and unhappiness depend on the state of the soul."

This is where the world has gone astray in its quest for happiness. The world has wrongly regarded happiness as a thing of the body, whereas it is an affair of the soul. It has confused pleasure with happiness. Men have been carried away with the fallacy that riches bring happiness.

Like the children in the fairy tale, the world has been seeking for the pot of gold at the elusive end of the rainbow of pleasure, when the real gold of happiness in the whole lies unnoticed and unsought in their own souls.

There is only one recipe for a happy life in this world and in the next, be good and you will be happy. An obsolescent word for happiness is blessedness. Our Lord said once, "Blessed (that is, happy) are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

"Be king of yourself and you will conquer the world."



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