

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

GOD UNDERSTANDS

When you have done the best you could, Why should you grieve at close of day, Though scoffs and jeers and insults rude Assail you on the tollsome way? When you have nobly acted right, With motives pure and honest hands, Though you have failed in people's sight, What matter?—when God understands. "Forgive them, Father!" whisper low, When idle tongues base falsehoods speak; Forgive them, as they may not know, That God, not men, to serve you seek. Pride's empty vaunt, nor Envy's dart, Nor crafty Slander's sneering bands, Need cause one tear, or wound thy heart, When thou art sure God understands. God understands; be this thy stay, In gloom as when the sky smiles fair; When Sorrow's veil drapes dark the way, And heavy grows thy cross to bear. God understands! His will be done; What'er He sends to thee is best; In Isles of Peace beyond Time's sun, You'll understand—and be at rest.

"READING MAKETH A FULL MAN"

By the Most Rev. John McIntyre, Archbishop of Birmingham. I sometimes wonder what is done during the long winter evenings by those who do not read. Yet those who have fallen under the fascinating power of reading can scarcely find words enough to describe its delights and benefits. There was Sir John Herschel, astronomer, and for five years, master of the British Mint, and he could turn from his stars and money to extol the more delectable love of reading. "Give a man this taste, and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making a happy man, unless indeed, you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history—with the wisest, the wittyest—with the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters that have adorned humanity. It is hardly possible but that the character should take a higher and better tone from the constant habit of associating in thought with a class of thinkers, to say the least of it, above the average of humanity." With regard to our reading, the principle holds good—"Tell me the company a man keeps, and I will tell you his character." But to return to our advocates of reading itself. By the side of the scientist, Sir John Herschel, I will set the poet Wordsworth. If ever there was a man filled with the entrancing love of nature and swayed by its "forces and magical apparitions," that man was Wordsworth, of whom it has been written that "he had no teachers nor inspirers save nature and solitude," yet who has spoken more affectionately of books? "Books, we know, Are a substantial world, both pure and good, Round which with tendrils strong as flesh and blood, Our pastime and our happiness can grow."

And now the question presents itself, if the attraction of reading is strong enough to overpower absorption in science, in business, in poetry, and in public life, how comes it that comparative few of those whose lives are dull, flat and humdrum fall under the influence of that attraction? Why do not ordinary folk, with hours of leisure, read more? Reading is the easiest, the cheapest, the most constant, and may be made the most beneficial of all entertainments. Have the depressing efforts to prepare for examinations, have the weary hours at the school desk when the sunlight was in the room, suggesting thoughts of games and the open country, affected the subliminal with a permanent horror of books? Is it our sad experience of school hours which has associated the ideas of study and reading with that of wretchedness? It must be admitted that some of the advocates of reading do speak in such a serious strain of the arduous spirit required for reading, that a course of reading is made to appear like a course of roughing it. Thus Mr. Ruskin: "When you come to a good book you must ask yourself, am I inclined to work as an Australian miner would? Are my pickaxes and shovels in good order and am I in good trim myself—my sleeves well up to the elbow, and my breath good, and my temper?" All this seriousness scares the human soul; and the worst of it, that the seriousness is not required. With reading we set out at the first with the intention of making ourselves strong and fit for social service, and of doing something to advance the cause of the Church.

But this noble purpose need not oppress our spirits or our tastes. In our pursuit of knowledge we can "make a pastime of each weary step" by choosing whatever field most attracts us. Think of the attractive list of interesting subjects offered by the Church—a list enticing enough to make the mouth of even a dullard water; the wide varied history of the Church, her liturgy, her social action in every department of human life, her great ecclesiastics, her saints and scholars, her religious orders, her charitable and educational institutions. There is no stint of interesting and ever fascinating material. There is something for every intellectual and artistic taste, for every mood, for every age of life—something to read about, to think about, to talk about. We can fill our idle hours with ever-varying interest, with studies that cannot grow stale from want of variety. They can become the source of perennial recreation and delight, but while refreshing our spirit they bring it strength and a deeper solace. To those young men who are at the outset of their career, nothing can be a greater protection against the pitfalls which will inevitably beset their path than membership in a Catholic reading club. Why should they waste their time in lounging about, or in idle trivialities, when they can find a deeper and a purer pleasure in these things which will enrich and strengthen their character, and not only fit them for greater success in life but also make them noble agents of abundant good to others? A body of well-educated Catholic young men of generous and loyal spirit would be a tower of strength to the Catholic Church.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

"BLESSED MARY'S LAND"

This is indeed the blessed Mary's land, Virgin and Mother of our dear Redeemer! All hearts are touched and softened at her name: Alike the bandit with the bloody hand, The priest, the prince, the scholar, and the peasant, The man of deeds, the visionary dreamer, Pay homage to her as one ever present! And even as children who have much offended, A too-indulgent father, in great shame, Penitent, and yet not daring unattended To go into his presence, at the gate. Speak to their sister, and confiding wait Till she goes in before and intercedes: So men, repenting of their evil deeds, And yet not venturing rashly to draw their near, Father's ear, Offer to her prayers and their confession, And she in heaven for them makes intercession. And if our faith had given us nothing more Than this example of all womanhood, So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good, So patient, peaceful, loyal, loving, pure, This were enough to prove it higher and truer. Than all the creeds the world had known before."

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

It is a dogma of faith that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception by a singular privilege and grace of God in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin. This privilege which the Blessed Virgin alone of all creatures enjoys is called her Immaculate Conception. The truth of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of Our Redeemer is as ancient as the mystery of the Redemption. It forms a component part of the grand scheme of human reparation disposed before the ages in the all-seeing mind of Eternal Wisdom. The Old Testament begins with the sad story of woe and distress brought upon the human race by our first parents. But amidst God's terrible denunciations of their awful crime, and His malediction, there comes the tender note of His love which promises another Mother, a Mother of Life, a Mother who shall be victorious over the evil one, and shall pass through life untouched by his foul contagion of sin. As the Old Testament begins by promising her coming, so the New Testament begins with proclaiming her presence. "Hail full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee," was the angel's salutation. "Blessed art thou among women" was the inspired greeting of her cousin Elizabeth. Thus from the first instant of her appearance in Holy Scripture both in prophecy and fulfillment, we are introduced to her as one who has been specially prepared by God for a high and holy mission, which absolutely demanded the prerogative of sinlessness. It was decreed that she should be not cleansed from sin like the rest of mankind, but that she should

from the first moment of her conception be preserved from sin. She was a child of Adam and Eve as if they had never fallen. The evil one never had any part in her. He who was born of her, therefore, could never in any sense be said to be under the sway of the evil one. Mary Immaculate is God's masterpiece, the crowning example of human sanctification, the completion of the ascending scale of sanctities in human kind, the topmost round in the mystical ladder of Jacob's vision, that reaches from earth to God Himself. We who are poor frail creatures tainted with the effects of original sin, wounded in nature and deprived of many graces which Mary enjoyed, look to her not only as the crowning glory of created sanctity, but as our Mother, Queen, Patroness and Advocate. On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception we behold her in the summary of all her perfections, and we humbly beseech her to assist us to gain some little portion of the graces which she possessed in such abundance. She will not turn deaf ears to our prayers, for she is co-redeematrix with Christ. Hers the duty is to urge onward the souls that Her Divine Son has redeemed. O Immaculate and Most Blessed Virgin, Mother of the Lord of our salvation, pray to Him, for us, thy children, who have recourse to thee.—The Pilot.

IT IS NOT EASY

To apologize. To begin over. To be unselfish. To take advice. To admit error. To face a sneer. To be charitable. To keep on trying. To be considerate. To avoid mistakes. To endure success. To keep out of the rut. To think and then act. To forgive and forget. To make the best of a little. To subdue an unruly temper. To maintain a high standard. To shoulder a deserved blame. To recognize the silver lining—But it always pays.

"TION"

He was a bright boy and he could answer the teacher's questions, no matter how hard they seemed to the other boys. "Now I want you to write a short essay using words that end in 'tion,'" said Miss Manning. And this is what the teacher read: "My father's hair is a recollection; mother's is an acquisition; sister's is a combination; brother's is a conflagration, and baby's is an anticipation." He didn't say anything about the teacher's hair, although he crossed a sentence that looked much like "teacher's is a discoloration."

AN ANCIENT IRISH MONASTERY

Far more interesting and important than any of the recent archeological discoveries on the Continent of Europe is the finding, a month or two ago, of the ruins of an ancient Irish monastery, on Mahee Island, Strangford Lough, near Belfast. The site has been identified as that of Nendrum Abbey, which is mentioned in Muirchua's Life of St. Patrick, written in the Seventh Century. The Belfast Natural History Society have already carried out extensive excavations, and brought to light inscribed stones, as yet undeciphered, and other valuable material. Bede's "Ecclesiastical History" mentions that Pope Honorius wrote in the year 634 to certain bishops of the Irish Church about the Paschal controversy and the Pelagian error; and one of the bishops mentioned in the letter is Cromous, Bishop of Nendrum. The island of Nendrum was afterwards named Mahee, in honor of a celebrated bishop of the monastery.—Ave Maria.

According to the separate natures which God has given to us, so must we choose the separate ways that will lead us to Him; and as long as there are different natures there must be various ways. Then let each of us take the path at the end whereof we see Him standing, never forgetting that—come whence and how they may—whosoever shall touch but the hem of His garment shall be made perfectly whole.—Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler.

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