

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

BAD THOUGHTS

The following, taken from the Ave Maria contains such lucid instructions on a matter of vital spiritual interest to many men, that it is here reprinted for the sake of our young men:

On one occasion the great St. Catherine of Siena was permitted by God to be tempted by devils for a long period of time—not only with thoughts of a wicked and unchaste character, but with visible images of a seductive and alluring kind. Her mind, her imagination and her senses were overwhelmed with these things. When this terrible trial was at last over, our Divine Lord made His presence known to her, and she asked Him: "Lord, where wert Thou when my soul was filled with all that evil?" Our Lord replied: "I was dwelling all the time in your heart." And how, Lord, said the saint, "couldst Thou dwell in a heart so full of villainy?" Jesus said to her: "Tell Me, My daughter, did those evil thoughts and images cause you pleasure or pain, distress or delight?" And she answered: "They caused me extreme distress and sadness." Then our Divine Lord showed her that His presence and His grace had prevented her from yielding and taking pleasure in the evil, and had kept her will faithful to Him in spite of the trouble in her mind, her senses, and her imagination.

A human being is a very marvelous and a very complicated creature. While one in nature and personality, we are manifold in the different powers and faculties of our being. Bodily senses, the imagination or fancy, the reason and understanding—all have their various functions and activities. But there is one faculty supreme over them all, and that is the human will. It is the function of the will to command and control the rest of our powers, to direct the attention of the mind to that or that subject, to rein in or to guide the imagination, to resist all unreasonable demands of the bodily appetites and passions.

In the state of unfallen nature—in the persons of our first parents before they sinned—this power of the will was undisputed, complete, subject to no weakness, perfectly able to control the bodily appetites, imagination and the thoughts and desires of the heart. With sin came a disorganization of the kingdom of man's being. Now the flesh rises in rebellion; imagination runs wild; reason, which should show the right way, becomes obscured and takes good for evil and evil for good.

By sin then the will has to a great extent, lost its rightful supremacy. It is still powerful in many directions; and we know what a strong will can accomplish when a man has set his heart upon a thing. But man's will is weakened in regard to good; and the thought of man's heart, as the sacred writer says, is "bent upon evil at all times." (Gen. vi. 5.) Had we been left to ourselves, the will would have been powerless to re-establish its control over the evil tendencies that reside in those other powers and faculties of our nature; it would inevitably have been led astray by its rebellious subjects—nay, it would have proved

traitor itself to what is good and right.

Indeed, this happens now, as we all know by sad experience. Since sin first entered into the world, the kingdom of man's heart is not at peace. There is a constant struggle within us between the forces of good and evil, each trying to capture the will. But we have a new power given to us—a supernatural power; the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord; and by this power of God's grace, which is never denied to those who humbly ask it, the will, strengthened in good, need never yield. Let passions rise, let the flesh rebel, let the imagination tempt us with thoughts of sinful pleasure, the will, the inner citadel of our being, by God's grace can stand firm and resist them all.

The point, then, is this: that sin is committed only when the will consents to the temptation. So long as the will resists, so long as evil thoughts and suggestions are displeasing to the will, however such thoughts may crowd in upon the mind, however vividly they may paint their tempting images upon the imagination, however distressingly they may rouse up the passions, while the will remains firmly fixed in opposition to the evil presented for its acceptance, there is and there can be no sin.

But what not seldom troubles good people, and very often troubles former sinners who have been happily converted to God, is this: while knowing that what has just been said is all true enough, they fear, after some storm of terrible temptation has assailed them, that they may have given the consent of the will, and so may have sinned and lost the grace and friendship of God. They rightly repeat to themselves that temptation is not the same as sin; that evil thoughts, when unbidden and unthought, are merely a temptation; they know that, do what we will, imagination will sometimes escape control and run riot in spite of all efforts; that, evil thoughts can not always be prevented from returning again and again; they know that there is not any sin at all in all this so long as the will withholds consent and does not side with its rebellious subjects. But the question will force itself upon them: "Did I do my best? Did I resist faithfully, or did I give consent?" Also, not infrequently, another painful anxiety arises in the shape of a feeling that pleasure has really been experienced in the course of the temptation.

Some pleasure of the lower part of our nature necessarily arises when any temptation is presented. It is no more possible to prevent this than it is to prevent the sensations of sight when an object is presented to the eye; and we can not always close the mind to impressions as we can close the eye. Were it not for this spontaneous pleasure of the lower faculties, there would be no temptation at all. But at first this pleasure is involuntary. It is in this at first involuntary pleasure that the allurements of the temptation consist. This pleasure of the lower faculties, of the senses or the imagination, solicits the approval and acquiescence of the will; and it is not till the understanding has recognized the presence of the evil thought or image which has given rise to the pleasurable allurements, and the will has consciously and

freely acquiesced in it, that any sin accrues. If the will does that, then the pleasure becomes voluntary, willful, and therefore sinful. It is true that this consent can be given in an instant; but it is also true that neither the length of a temptation nor the persistence of evil thoughts is any sign that a person has given way.

Now as to the other question: "Did I do my best? Did I resist faithfully, or did I give consent?" The answer to this for those who are sincerely and habitually trying to serve God and to avoid mortal sin is that such fears are vain and groundless. Let such good souls remember that God loves them; that His honor is concerned in their victory over temptation; that He dwells within them as He dwelt within St. Catherine in her most terrible and prolonged trial; that He takes care of them and will not easily let them fall into sin,—will not forsake them unless they first forsake Him.

Further, for a person who has determined to avoid mortal sin as the greatest of evils, suddenly to change over and turn against God and commit a mortal sin even of thought alone, means such a revolution of mind and heart that it is a revolution had really taken place, if mortal sin in thought had truly been committed, such a one would know it, and would have no doubt at all on the matter. If, therefore, any good soul trying sincerely and earnestly to serve God and resolved to keep out of mortal sin at all costs, is troubled after temptation by doubts and fears as to whether sinful consent has been given, such doubts and fears are to be instantly dismissed.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

HOW LEO SAVED HER LIFE

Leo was a superb creature, and a striking illustration of the almost human intelligence sometimes to be met with among our canine friends. He was a thoroughbred Ulmer hound, a breed which is unfortunately not well known in America, as it does not thrive in our climate. Taller than a mastiff, and of longer, leaner build, he was also much more quick and graceful in his movements.

He was a very dignified dog, and, though ordinary good tempered, had not a very sociable disposition. Indeed, the only person toward whom he displayed any demonstrative affection, was Bertha, the little girl who was his mistress whom he loved and of whom he was almost an inseparable companion. My nephew, Archie, called her the Prince, because she bore a remarkable resemblance to one of the little unfortunate princes who were shut up in the Tower of London by their inhuman uncle, King Richard III.

Every afternoon at 4 o'clock Archie would sit by the window, watching for the fair-haired girl and the big dog and all the little dogs when they started for their afternoon walk. One afternoon, however, she did not come as usual, and after that it was many weeks before we saw her again.

The blinds of the house opposite were drawn down. Doctors' carriages were often standing in front of the door, and finally one morning Gretchen, a neat rosy cheeked German maid, who brought us our breakfast, said in an awed voice that the little Fraulein across the way was dying. But she did not die for the noble animal, who loved her so dearly, helped to save her life.

All through her long illness Leo was constantly by her bedside, and even when the fever was at its height she would try to stroke his great head with her feeble little hand. A time came when she was too weak even to do this, and when the dog saw her mother crying bitterly, and the doctor looking so grave as he felt the little girl's pulse, Leo seemed to understand that things were getting very serious.

There was in Baden at that time a celebrated physician, Doctor Helligenthal, who was very rich, very learned and eccentric. He had attended to little Bertha for several years, and in spite of his gruff manner, the child was devoted to him, but Bertha's mother did not like him at all.

With people who were not ill he was often very brusque and disagreeable in his manner, and after numerous disagreements this lady had finally dismissed him. But Leo with his wonderful memory had not forgotten how often his little mistress had grown stronger and better under the great physician's treatment.

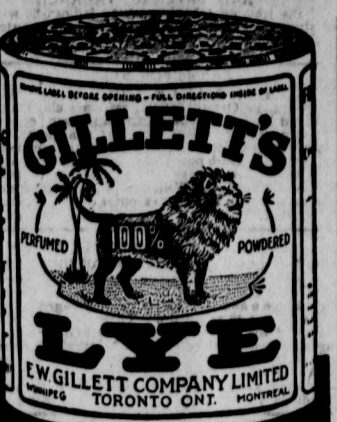
So on this morning, having quietly slipped down the stairs and out of the house, he made straight for the street in which Dr. H. lived, and on returning from his round of visits, found the huge brute waiting for him on the doorsteps of his house.

Leo whined and barked, licked the doctor's hand and tugged at his coat, and the look of appeal in his brown eyes said so plainly, "Come with me," that the doctor could not help being moved.

In the sick room all hope had been abandoned. There were three doctors in consultation, Bertha's mother was kneeling beside the bed, stifling her sobs in the satin coverlet. The child lay back upon the pillows, very white and still. For hours they had been unable to induce her to speak, or to swallow any medicine. She had not taken the slightest notice of anyone.

Suddenly there was a noise of a carriage tearing up the street, a peal at the bell, a sound of an animal bounding up the stairs.

There was Leo back again at last—but who's step was that? Could it be—?



FOR MAKING SOAP SOFTENING WATER DISINFECTING CLOSETS, DRAINS SINKS, &c.

The portieres were pushed aside, and the immense figure of Doctor Helligenthal loomed on the threshold.

"Thank God it is you!" gasped the maid. "Perhaps you can save our Fraulein," then she led the way to the sick room where the doctors were in attendance.

He exchanged a silent greeting with his colleagues and went straight to the bedside. No need to tell him what was amiss. He threw aside his huge fur-lined cloak, pulled off his gloves and took the child's hand in his.

There was a breathless pause. Every one was staring at him in amazement. He had come among them like an apparition. Who had summoned him. He prepared immediately a strengthening draught, although the nurse whispered to him that she would not touch it.

"She will take it from me," he motioned for them all to move back from the bed. Then he bent over little Bertha and fixed his strange, deep-set, magnetic eyes on her face.

"Bertha," he said, shaking slightly the hand that he held, "Bertha, look at me." Almost instantly the heavy eyes opened and wandered to his face. "You know me," he went on, still holding her with that deep, magnetic gaze, "now try to understand me. It was Leo who brought me here," he continued, quietly, "he came all the way to my house, because he knew that I loved you, and would want to help you."

"Leo," the pale lips murmured. It was the first word she had spoken for hours.

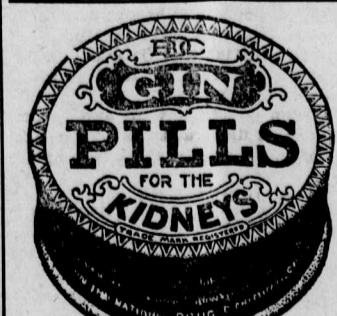
"Yes, it was Leo. And I came at once, and will make you well very soon, if you will do just what I say. You trust me, do you not, my little one?"

"Yes,—I—trust—you," she gasped. "Then you will take this for me."

As he held a glass to her lips one of the three doctors started to come toward him. A fierce snarl from Leo caused him speedily to withdraw back. The huge brute had stretched himself across the floor, so as to prevent any approach to the bedside, with his head erect, and with his keen watchful eyes he looked like a big gray sentinel on guard.

Half an hour later the first gleam of hope and joy had come into that sorrowful house. Then the doctor had gone. Bertha's mother had dried her tears. Stephanie, the Prince's maid, had a smile upon her face.

Leo, the noble dog, whose wonderful instinct, quickened by his love for his mistress, was due all this happiness, lay stretched peacefully on the hearth rug, banging the floor contentedly with his tail from time to time, his faithful eyes turned toward the group by the bedside, where little Bertha lay sleeping in the great doctor's arms, her weary little head resting upon his shoulder and her long golden curls mingling with his long black beard. It was the first



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peaceful number she had had for weeks.

She grew rapidly stronger and well after that, and soon a time came when, to Archie's great delight, "The Little Prince" walked out with all the dogs once more. And one of her very first walks was to carry a huge bunch of lovely roses out of her own garden to her beloved Doctor Helligenthal. Archie, to his great delight, was asked to go with her on this occasion. "For you see, dear," she said, in her serious way, "I appreciate him, and Leo appreciates him, and you are my best friend, I want you to love him too."

For months after that Leo barked furiously at the other physicians whenever he met them on the street. And Leo wears a collar of beautiful wroughtsilver which was engraved, "Leo Fidelis, from Dr. H. as a reward for his devotion to his mistress."

CONVERSION

OF AN ITALIAN BAPTIST MISSIONARY

The Rev. Alfred Piccini, an Italian Baptist minister connected with the Italian colony of Winsted, Conn., and the Colgate Seminary of Brooklyn, N. Y., recently made his solemn abjuration of heresy to Rev. John T. McNicholas, O. P., in the chapel of the Dominican Fathers, East Sixty-eighth street, New York city. Mr. Piccini's defection from the faith of his forefathers was not malicious. It was not a turning away from the light, but rather due to the contagion of indifference contracted from irreligious companions during his college days. He found himself in the darkness of doubt and contradiction with those who professed to have the light of Christ. He heard the voice of Rome, his mother, calling, and for many months he groped on until the instincts of faith, so strong in the Catholic character, led him to the Catholic Church.

With childlike simplicity he said within himself: "Why this is my mother." Mr. Piccini made the following statement to the Dominican Fathers after his reception into the Church:

"I was obliged at a very early age to go to a boarding college where I had the misfortune of falling in with companions who were utterly indifferent to religion. The contagion was soon communicated, and my faith, in which I was never firmly established, died. I lived in this indifference until I came to the United States, when I again experienced that demand in our nature for the things of religion. I was invited by a friend to a Protestant church, the religion of which I accepted, convinced, as I then thought, of its possession of the truth. After some time I became a Baptist missionary. In the exercise of my ministry I was enthusiastic until the study of the Scriptures brought many doubts to my mind. I had recourse to prayer, and the Lord heard me and led me back to the Catholic Church. During my stay in the Protestant Church, or shall I say my years of straying away from my mother, I had an opportunity, both as a layman of the Church and as a minister, to observe and to conclude that Italians do not become Protestants because of its tenets, but because of economic necessity. Very few become Protestants in the true sense of the word. I am very happy, through the grace of God, to have extricated myself from the forest of error and darkness whither I had strayed and overjoyed to be again in the Church of Rome, where I have found that comfort and peace which Protestantism is powerless to communicate.—Philadelphia Standard and Times.

HIS WAY

The secret of all the Church's work for the bodies as well as for the souls of men is revealed in the following anecdote: During the siege of Paris in 1870 a Christian Brother tenderly cared for a poor fellow stricken with small-pox. A witness of the Brother's courage said to him: "What you are doing I would not do for ten thousand francs." Replied the Brother: "And I would not do it for ten times ten thousand francs." Then, kissing his crucifix, he added: "But I do it for Jesus Christ."

PARENTS HAVE THE POWER OF RAISING UP SAINTS

The responsibility which rests upon parents in the upbringing of their children was dwelt upon by Rev. John Leather, O. P., when, at Haverstock Hill, England, he spoke of "The Safeguard of the Catholic Home." He quoted Cardinal Manning: "Only God can make a home; a man might build a house, but unless our Lord is in that house it is merely a shelter, and not a home. Catholics have a great and solemn duty to bring up their children in the way that makes for happiness. Catholic parents must first be fervent themselves," continued the preacher. "We might say the Catholic home is a school, and the parents the teachers. The parents must study well what they teach. Unless they love and study the law of Almighty God, how can they teach their children the love and fear of God? So great is the responsibility of Catholic parents. They have to render an account to God, not only for their own selves, but for the little children committed to them. And what an honor is thus committed to Catholic parents! God puts into their hands the means of pre-

paring souls in the way that will bring them to heaven to serve God for all eternity. The parents have the power of raising up saints and giving them the power of reigning with God for ever in heaven. It is great honor and like all honors, it has its responsibility."

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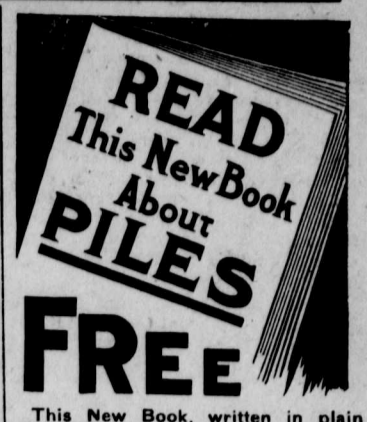
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